

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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## THE MOONSTONE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE WOMAN IN WHITE," &c. &c.

### CHAPTER X.

ONE on the top of the other, the rest of the company followed the Ablewhites, till we had the whole tale of them complete. Including the family, they were twenty-four in all. It was a noble sight to see, when they were settled in their places round the dinner-table, and the Rector of Frizinghall (with beautiful elocution) rose and said grace.

There is no need to worry you with a list of the guests. You will meet none of them a second time—in my part of the story, at any rate—with the exception of two.

Those two sat on either side of Miss Rachel, who, as queen of the day, was naturally the great attraction of the party. On this occasion, she was more particularly the centre-point towards which everybody's eyes were directed; for (to my lady's secret annoyance) she wore her wonderful birthday present which eclipsed all the rest—the Moonstone. It was without any setting when it had been placed in her hands; but that universal genius, Mr. Franklin, had contrived, with the help of his neat fingers and a little bit of silver wire, to fix it as a brooch in the bosom of her white dress. Everybody wondered at the prodigious size and beauty of the Diamond, as a matter of course. But the only two of the company who said anything out of the common way about it, were those two guests I have mentioned, who sat by Miss Rachel on her right hand and her left.

The guest on her left was Mr. Candy, our doctor at Frizinghall.

This was a pleasant, companionable little man, with the drawback, however, I must own, of being too fond, in season and out of season, of his joke, and of plunging in rather a headlong manner into talk with strangers, without waiting to feel his way first. In society, he was constantly making mistakes, and setting people unintentionally by the ears together. In his medical practice he was a more prudent man; picking up his discretion (as his enemies said) by a kind of instinct, and proving to be generally right where more carefully conducted doctors turned out to be wrong. What he said about

the Diamond to Miss Rachel was said, as usual, by way of a mystification or joke. He gravely entreated her (in the interests of science) to let him take it home and burn it. "We will first heat it, Miss Rachel," says the doctor, "to such and such a degree; then we will expose it to a current of air; and, little by little—puff!—we evaporate the Diamond, and spare you a world of anxiety about the safe keeping of a valuable precious stone!" My lady, listening with rather a careworn expression on her face, seemed to wish that the doctor had been in earnest, and that he could have found Miss Rachel zealous enough in the cause of science to sacrifice her birthday gift.

The other guest who sat on my young lady's right hand was an eminent public character—being no other than the celebrated Indian traveller, Mr. Murthwaite, who, at risk of his life, had penetrated in disguise where no European had ever set foot before.

This was a long, lean, wiry, brown, silent man. He had a weary look, and a very steady attentive eye. It was rumoured that he was tired of the humdrum life among the people in our parts, and longing to go back and wander off on the tramp again in the wild places of the East. Except what he said to Miss Rachel about her jewel, I doubt if he spoke six words, or drank so much as a single glass of wine, all through the dinner. The Moonstone was the only object that interested him in the smallest degree. The fame of it seemed to have reached him, in some of those perilous Indian places where his wanderings had lain. After looking at it silently for so long a time that Miss Rachel began to get confused, he said to her in his cool immovable way, "If you ever go to India, Miss Verinder, don't take your uncle's birthday gift with you. A Hindoo diamond is sometimes a part of a Hindoo religion. I know a certain city, and a certain temple in that city, where, dressed as you are now, your life would not be worth five minutes' purchase." Miss Rachel, safe in England, was quite delighted to hear of her danger in India. The Bouncers were more delighted still; they dropped their knives and forks with a crash, and burst out together vehemently, "O! how interesting!" My lady fidgeted in her chair, and changed the subject.

As the dinner got on, I became aware, little

by little, that this festival was not prospering as other like festivals had prospered before it.

Looking back at the birthday now, by the light of what happened afterwards, I am half inclined to think that the cursed Diamond must have cast a blight on the whole company. I plied them well with wine; and, being a privileged character, followed the unpopular dishes round the table, and whispered to the company confidentially, "Please to change your mind, and try it; for I know it will do you good." Nine times out of ten they changed their minds—out of regard for their old original Betteredge, they were pleased to say—but all to no purpose. There were gaps of silence in the talk, as the dinner got on, that made me feel personally uncomfortable. When they did use their tongues again, they used them innocently, in the most unfortunate manner and to the worst possible purpose. Mr. Candy, the doctor, for instance, said more unlucky things than I ever knew him to say before. Take one sample of the way in which he went on, and you will understand what I had to put up with at the side-board, officiating as I was in the character of a man who had the prosperity of the festival at heart.

One of our ladies present at dinner was worthy Mrs. Threadgall, widow of the late Professor of that name. Talking of her deceased husband perpetually, this good lady never mentioned to strangers that he *was* deceased. She thought, I suppose, that every able-bodied adult in England ought to know as much as that. In one of the gaps of silence, somebody mentioned the dry and rather nasty subject of human anatomy; whereupon good Mrs. Threadgall straightway brought in her late husband as usual, without mentioning that he was dead. Anatomy she described as the Professor's favourite recreation in his leisure hours. As ill-luck would have it, Mr. Candy, sitting opposite (who knew nothing of the deceased gentleman), heard her. Being the most polite of men, he seized the opportunity of assisting the Professor's anatomical amusements on the spot.

"They have got some remarkably fine skeletons lately at the College of Surgeons," says Mr. Candy, across the table, in a loud cheerful voice. "I strongly recommend the Professor, ma'am, when he next has an hour to spare, to pay them a visit."

You might have heard a pin fall. The company (out of respect to the Professor's memory) all sat speechless. I was behind Mrs. Threadgall at the time, plying her confidentially with a glass of hock. She dropped her head, and said in a very low voice, "My beloved husband is no more."

Unlucky Mr. Candy, hearing nothing, and miles away from suspecting the truth, went on across the table louder and politer than ever.

"The Professor may not be aware," says he, "that the card of a member of the College will admit him, on any day but Sunday, between the hours of ten and four."

Mrs. Threadgall dropped her head right into her tucker, and, in a lower voice still, repeated the solemn words, "My beloved husband is no more."

I winked hard at Mr. Candy across the table. Miss Rachel touched his arm. My lady looked unutterable things at him. Quite useless! On he went, with a cordiality that there was no stopping any how. "I shall be delighted," says he, "to send the Professor my card, if you will oblige me by mentioning his present address?"

"His present address, sir, is *the grave*," says Mrs. Threadgall, suddenly losing her temper, and speaking with an emphasis and fury that made the glasses ring again. "The Professor has been dead these ten years!"

"Oh, good Heavens!" says Mr. Candy. Excepting the Bouncers, who burst out laughing, such a blank now fell on the company, that they might all have been going the way of the Professor, and hailing as he did from the direction of the grave.

So much for Mr. Candy. The rest of them were nearly as provoking in their different ways as the doctor himself. When they ought to have spoken, they didn't speak; or when they did speak, they were perpetually at cross purposes. Mr. Godfrey, though so eloquent in public, declined to exert himself in private. Whether he was sulky, or whether he was bashful, after his discomfiture in the rose-garden, I can't say. He kept all his talk for the private ear of the lady who sat next to him. She was one of his committee-women—a spiritually minded person, with a fine show of collar-bone and a pretty taste in champagne; liked it dry, you understand, and plenty of it. Being close behind these two at the side-board, I can testify, from what I heard pass between them, that the company lost a good deal of very improving conversation, which I caught up while drawing the corks, and carving the mutton, and so forth. What they said about their Charities I didn't hear. When I had time to listen to them, they had got a long way beyond their women to be confined, and their women to be rescued, and were buckling to on serious subjects. Religion (I understood them to say, between the corks and the carving) meant love. And love meant religion. And earth was heaven a little the worse for wear. And heaven was earth, done up again to look like new. Earth had some very objectionable people in it; but, to make amends for that, all the women in heaven would be members of a prodigious committee that never quarrelled, with all the men in attendance on them as ministering angels. Beautiful! beautiful! But why the mischief did Mr. Godfrey keep it all to his lady and himself?

Mr. Franklin again—surely, you will say, Mr. Franklin stirred the company up into making a pleasant evening of it?

Nothing of the sort! He had quite recovered himself, and he was in wonderful force and spirits, Penelope having informed

him, I suspect, of Mr. Godfrey's reception in the rose-garden. But, talk as he might, nine times out of ten he pitched on the wrong subject, or he addressed himself to the wrong person; the end of it being that he offended some, and puzzled all of them. That foreign training of his—those French and German and Italian sides of him, to which I have already alluded, came out, at my lady's hospitable board, in a most bewildering manner.

What do you think, for instance, of his discussing the lengths to which a married woman might let her admiration go for a man who was not her husband, and putting it in his clear-headed witty French way to the maiden aunt of the Vicar of Frizinghall? What do you think, when he shifted to the German side, of his telling the lord of the manor, while that great authority on cattle was quoting his experience in the breeding of bulls, that experience, properly understood, counted for nothing, and that the proper way to breed bulls was to look deep into your own mind, evolve out of it the idea of a perfect bull, and produce him? What do you say, when our county member, growing hot at cheese and salad time, about the spread of democracy in England, burst out as follows: "If we once lose our ancient safeguards, Mr. Blake, I beg to ask you, what have we got left?"—what do you say to Mr. Franklin answering, from the Italian point of view: "We have got three things left, sir—Love, Music, and Salad"? He not only terrified the company with such outbreaks as these, but, when the English side of him turned up in due course, he lost his foreign smoothness; and, getting on the subject of the medical profession, said such downright things in ridicule of doctors, that he actually put good-humoured little Mr. Candy in a rage.

The dispute between them began in Mr. Franklin being led—I forget how—to acknowledge that he had latterly slept very badly at night. Mr. Candy thereupon told him that his nerves were all out of order, and that he ought to go through a course of medicine immediately. Mr. Franklin replied that a course of medicine, and a course of groping in the dark, meant, in his estimation, one and the same thing. Mr. Candy, hitting back smartly, said that Mr. Franklin himself was, constitutionally speaking, groping in the dark after sleep, and that nothing but medicine could help him to find it. Mr. Franklin, keeping the ball up on his side, said he had often heard of the blind leading the blind, and now, for the first time, he knew what it meant. In this way, they kept it going briskly, cut and thrust, till they both of them got hot—Mr. Candy, in particular, so completely losing his self-control, in defence of his profession, that my lady was obliged to interfere, and forbid the dispute to go on. This necessary act of authority put the last extinguisher on the spirits of the company. The talk spurted up again here and there, for a minute or two at a time; but there was a miserable lack of life and sparkle in it. The

Devil (or the Diamond) possessed that dinner-party; and it was a relief to everybody when my mistress rose, and gave the ladies the signal to leave the gentlemen over their wine.

I had just ranged the decanters in a row before old Mr. Ablewhite (who represented the master of the house), when there came a sound from the terrace which startled me out of my company manners on the instant. Mr. Franklin and I looked at each other; it was the sound of the Indian drum. As I live by bread, here were the jugglers returning to us with the return of the Moonstone to the house!

As they rounded the corner of the terrace, and came in sight, I hobbled out to warn them off. But, as ill-luck would have it, the two Bouncers were beforehand with me. They whizzed out on to the terrace like a couple of skyrockets, wild to see the Indians exhibit their tricks. The other ladies followed; the gentlemen came out on their side. Before you could say, "Lord bless us!" the rogues were making their salaams; and the Bouncers were kissing the pretty little boy.

Mr. Franklin got on one side of Miss Rachel, and I put myself behind her. If our suspicions were right, there she stood, innocent of all knowledge of the truth, showing the Indians the Diamond in the bosom of her dress!

I can't tell you what tricks they performed, or how they did it. What with the vexation about the dinner, and what with the provocation of the rogues coming back just in the nick of time to see the jewel with their own eyes, I own I lost my head. The first thing that I remember noticing was the sudden appearance on the scene of the Indian traveller, Mr. Murthwaite. Skirting the half-circle in which the gentlefolks stood or sat, he came quietly behind the jugglers, and spoke to them on a sudden in the language of their own country.

If he had pricked them with a bayonet, I doubt if the Indians could have started and turned on him with a more tigerish quickness than they did, on hearing the first words that passed his lips. The next moment, they were bowing and salaaming to him in their most polite and snaky way. After a few words in the unknown tongue had passed on either side, Mr. Murthwaite withdrew as quietly as he had approached. The chief Indian, who acted as interpreter, thereupon wheeled about again towards the gentlefolks. I noticed that the fellow's coffee-coloured face had turned grey since Mr. Murthwaite had spoken to him. He bowed to my lady, and informed her that the exhibition was over. The Bouncers, indescribably disappointed, burst out with a loud "O!" directed against Mr. Murthwaite for stopping the performance. The chief Indian laid his hand humbly on his breast, and said a second time that the juggling was over. The little boy went round with the hat. The ladies withdrew to the drawing-room; and the gentlemen (excepting Mr. Franklin and Mr. Murthwaite) returned to their wine. I and the footman fol-

lowed the Indians, and saw them safe off the premises.

Going back by way of the shrubbery, I smelt tobacco, and found Mr. Franklin and Mr. Murthwaite (the latter smoking a cheroot) walking slowly up and down among the trees. Mr. Franklin beckoned to me to join them.

"This," says Mr. Franklin, presenting me to the great traveller, "is Gabriel Betteredge, the old servant and friend of our family, of whom I spoke to you just now. Tell him, if you please, what you have just told me."

Mr. Murthwaite took his cheroot out of his mouth, and leaned, in his weary way, against the trunk of a tree.

"Mr. Betteredge," he began, "those three Indians are no more jugglers than you and I are."

Here was a new surprise! I naturally asked the traveller if he had ever met with the Indians before.

"Never," says Mr. Murthwaite; "but I know what Indian juggling really is. All you have seen to-night is a very bad and clumsy imitation of it. Unless, after long experience, I am utterly mistaken, those men are high-caste Brahmins. I charged them with being disguised, and you saw how it told on them, clever as the Hindoo people are in concealing their feelings. There is a mystery about their conduct that I can't explain. They have doubly sacrificed their caste—first, in crossing the sea; secondly, in disguising themselves as jugglers. In the land they live in, that is a tremendous sacrifice to make. There must be some very serious motive at the bottom of it, and some justification of no ordinary kind to plead for them, in recovery of their caste, when they return to their own country."

I was struck dumb. Mr. Murthwaite went on with his cheroot. Mr. Franklin, after what looked to me like a little private veering about between the different sides of his character, broke the silence as follows, speaking in his nice Italian manner, with his solid English foundation showing through:

"I feel some hesitation, Mr. Murthwaite, in troubling you with family matters, in which you can have no interest, and which I am not very willing to speak of out of our own circle. But, after what you have said, I feel bound, in the interests of Lady Verinder and her daughter, to tell you something which may possibly put the clue into your hands. I speak to you in confidence; you will oblige me, I am sure, by not forgetting that?"

With this preface, he told the Indian traveller (speaking now in his clear-headed French way) all that he had told me at the Shivering Sand. Even the immovable Mr. Murthwaite was so interested in what he heard, that he let his cheroot go out.

"Now," says Mr. Franklin, when he had done, "what does your experience say?"

"My experience," answered the traveller, "says that you have had more narrow escapes of your life, Mr. Franklin Blake, than I

have had of mine; and that is saying a great deal."

It was Mr. Franklin's turn to be astonished now.

"Is it really as serious as that?" he asked.

"In my opinion it is," answered Mr. Murthwaite. "I can't doubt, after what you have told me, that the restoration of the Moonstone to its place on the forehead of the Indian idol is the motive and the justification of that sacrifice of caste which I alluded to just now. Those men will wait their opportunity with the patience of cats, and will use it with the ferocity of tigers. How you have escaped them I can't imagine," says the eminent traveller, lighting his cheroot again, and staring hard at Mr. Franklin. "You have been carrying the Diamond backwards and forwards, here and in London, and you are still a living man! Let us try and account for it. It was daylight, both times, I suppose, when you took the jewel out of the bank in London?"

"Broad daylight," says Mr. Franklin.

"And plenty of people in the streets?"

"Plenty."

"You settled, of course, to arrive at Lady Verinder's house at a certain time? It's a lonely country between this and the station. Did you keep your appointment?"

"No. I arrived four hours earlier than my appointment."

"I beg to congratulate you on that proceeding! When did you take the Diamond to the bank at the town here?"

"I took it an hour after I had brought it to this house—and three hours before anybody was prepared for seeing me in these parts."

"I beg to congratulate you again! Did you bring it back here alone?"

"No. I happened to ride back with my cousins and the groom."

"I beg to congratulate you for the third time! If you ever feel inclined to travel beyond the civilised limits, Mr. Blake, let me know, and I will go with you. You are a lucky man."

Here I struck in. This sort of thing didn't at all square with my English ideas.

"You don't really mean to say, sir," I asked, "that they would have taken Mr. Franklin's life, to get their Diamond, if he had given them the chance?"

"Do you smoke, Mr. Betteredge?" says the traveller.

"Yes, sir."

"Do you care much for the ashes left in your pipe, when you empty it?"

"No, sir."

"In the country those men came from, they care just as much about killing a man, as you care about emptying the ashes out of your pipe. If a thousand lives stood between them and the getting back of their Diamond—and if they thought they could destroy those lives without discovery—they would take them all. The sacrifice of caste is a serious thing in India, if you like. The sacrifice of life is nothing at all."



I expressed my opinion, upon this, that they were a set of murdering thieves. Mr. Murthwaite expressed *his* opinion that they were a wonderful people. Mr. Franklin, expressing no opinion at all, brought us back to the matter in hand.

"They have seen the Moonstone on Miss Verinder's dress," he said. "What is to be done?"

"What your uncle threatened to do," answered Mr. Murthwaite. "Colonel Herncastle understood the people he had to deal with. Send the Diamond to-morrow (under guard of more than one man) to be cut up at Amsterdam. Make half a dozen diamonds of it, instead of one. There is an end of its sacred identity as The Moonstone—and there is an end of the conspiracy."

Mr. Franklin turned to me.

"There is no help for it," he said. "We must speak to Lady Verinder to-morrow."

"What about to-night, sir?" I asked. "Suppose the Indians come back?"

Mr. Murthwaite answered me, before Mr. Franklin could speak.

"The Indians won't risk coming back to-night," he said. "The direct way is hardly ever the way they take to anything—let alone a matter like this, in which the slightest mistake might be fatal to their reaching their end."

"But suppose the rogues are bolder than you think, sir?" I persisted.

"In that case," says Mr. Murthwaite, "let the dogs loose. Have you got any big dogs in the yard?"

"Two, sir. A mastiff and a bloodhound."

"They will do. In the present emergency, Mr. Betteredge, the mastiff and the bloodhound have one great merit—they are not likely to be troubled with your scruples about the sanctity of human life."

The strumming of the piano reached us from the drawing-room, as he fired that shot at me. He threw away his cheroot, and took Mr. Franklin's arm, to go back to the ladies. I noticed that the sky was clouding over fast, as I followed them to the house. Mr. Murthwaite noticed it too. He looked round at me, in his dry, drolling way, and said:

"The Indians will want their umbrellas, Mr. Betteredge, to-night!"

It was all very well for *him* to joke. But I was not an eminent traveller—and my way in this world had not led me into playing ducks and drakes with my own life, among thieves and murderers in the outlandish places of the earth. I went into my own little room, and sat down in my chair in a perspiration, and wondered helplessly what was to be done next. In this anxious frame of mind, other men might have ended by working themselves up into a fever; I ended in a different way. I lit my pipe, and took a turn at Robinson Crusoe.

Before I had been at it five minutes, I came to this amazing bit—page one hundred and sixty-one—as follows:

"Fear of Danger is ten thousand times more terrifying than Danger itself, when apparent to

the Eyes; and we find the Burthen of Anxiety greater, by much, than the Evil which we are anxious about."

The man who doesn't believe in Robinson Crusoe, after *that*, is a man with a screw loose in his understanding, or a man lost in the mist of his own self-conceit! Argument is thrown away upon him; and pity is better reserved for some person with a livelier faith.

I was far on with my second pipe, and still lost in admiration of that wonderful book, when Penelope (who had been handing round the tea) came in with her report from the drawing-room. She had left the Bouncers singing a duet—words beginning with a large "O," and music to correspond. She had observed that my lady made mistakes in her game of whist for the first time in our experience of her. She had seen the great traveller asleep in a corner. She had overheard Mr. Franklin sharpening his wits on Mr. Godfrey, at the expense of Ladies' Charities in general; and she had noticed that Mr. Godfrey hit him back again rather more smartly than became a gentleman of his benevolent character. She had detected Miss Rachel, apparently engaged in appeasing Mrs. Threadgall by showing her some photographs, and really occupied in stealing looks at Mr. Franklin which no intelligent lady's maid could misinterpret for a single instant. Finally, she had missed Mr. Candy, the doctor, who had mysteriously disappeared from the drawing-room, and had then mysteriously returned, and entered into conversation with Mr. Godfrey. Upon the whole, things were prospering better than the experience of the dinner gave us any right to expect. If we could only hold on for another hour, old Father Time would bring up their carriages, and relieve us of them altogether.

Everything wears off in this world; and even the comforting effect of Robinson Crusoe wore off, after Penelope left me. I got fidgety again, and resolved on making a survey of the grounds before the rain came. Instead of taking the footman, whose nose was human, and therefore useless in any emergency, I took the bloodhound with me. *His* nose for a stranger was to be depended on. We went all round the premises, and out into the road; and returned as wise as we went, having discovered no such thing as a lurking human creature anywhere. I chained up the dog again, for the present; and, returning once more by way of the shrubbery, met two of our gentlemen coming out towards me from the drawing-room. The two were Mr. Candy and Mr. Godfrey, still (as Penelope had reported them) in conversation together, and laughing softly over some pleasant conceit of their own. I thought it rather odd that those two should have run up a friendship together—but passed on, of course, without appearing to notice them.

The arrival of the carriages was the signal for the arrival of the rain. It poured as if it meant to pour all night. With the exception of the doctor, whose gig was waiting for him,

the rest of the company went home snugly under cover in close carriages. I told Mr. Candy that I was afraid he would get wet through. He told me, in return, that he wondered I had arrived at my time of life, without knowing that a doctor's skin was waterproof. So he drove away in the rain, laughing over his own little joke; and so we got rid of our dinner company.

The next thing to tell is the story of the night.

### A LONG LOOK-OUT.

AN anxiously expected event is entered in the books as coming off, not to-morrow, nor yet the next day, nor even so soon as to-morrow twelvemonth; but as surely as Time makes the music of the spheres by turning the cranks of their respective barrels—they do not want St. Peter to wind them up, as Byron romanced in some naughty verses—so surely will that phenomenon occur when the spheres have performed their due number of revolutions.

The interval will not be too long to employ in completing a few preliminary arrangements, in making a few preparatory studies, in deciding on stations for a good look-out, in regulating time-pieces, and polishing spy-glasses. For although the sight to be beheld—weather permitting—belongs to the class of solar eclipses, it is not one of those in which much can be done by bits of smoked glass and blackened noses, or by mounting three-legged stools to get a nearer view. It is the Transit of Venus across the disk of the Sun—a would-be eclipse of the Sun by Venus; an attempt, in short, on the part of the Morning Star, Lucifer, or l'Etoile du Berger, to deprive us of the light of day.

The questions at issue to be decided by this event are, Where we are? and, as a corollary therefrom, How much we weigh?—"We" being not merely you and I (although our weight, of course, does count for something), but We, the planet Earth and our satellite, the Moon, travelling together in friendly company round, and round, and round the Sun. "Where we are," moreover, includes Where the Sun is—a matter by no means so clear as the public fancy.

The school-books give his distance from us as ninety-five millions of miles, to a furlong. But people, who have got past their school-books, dispute about several millions, more or less. It is understood, however, that whether the Sun be eventually brought forward or pushed farther back by future calculations, he is to light and warm us all the same, pretty much as heretofore. His *exact* distance is hoped to be determined by the transits of Venus which are to take place on the ninth of December, 1874, and on the sixth of December, 1882, respectively. If we fail in satisfying our scruples then, another chance will be offered to us on the eighth of June, 2004, and on the fifth of June, 2012.

Moreover, the spectacle we are patiently awaiting in 1874 has almost the charm of novelty. True, it has been repeated, over and over again, numbers of times incalculable. Before there was human eye to witness it, it occurred at its stated times and seasons. And after there were human eyes, it re-occurred without their being the wiser for it. The shepherds who watched their flocks by night—who noted the disappearance of old stars and the sudden appearance of new ones—knew nothing of our expected curious phenomenon; not because it is a daylight spectacle (for, if those Chaldean shepherds were so clear-sighted by night, we may be sure they were not blind by day), but because their eyes, good as they were, were not sharp enough to detect the presence of *that* test-object. An eagle's vision only had a chance of obtaining (unassisted) cognizance of what was then occurring. Their astronomical pursuits were checked by a difficulty analogous to that set forth in "How should he cut it without a knife?—How should he marry without a wife?" For, respecting those primeval observers, it may be asked, "How should they know it without an almanack? How should they see it without a telescope?"

Our interest in the coming phenomenon is increased by the circumstance that the passages of the planet Venus across the solar disk are extremely rare. And what is still more curious, they happen in couples. We have to wait for a long, long interval—more than three generations at the least—before we have the chance of seeing the first (in 1874); and then, if we can contrive to live for eight years longer, the celestial orrery presents us with another. After which, more than a century has to elapse before we are favoured with a third transit.

The first observed passage of Venus across the sun's disk happened on the 4th of December, 1639. Delambre has calculated a list of the transits of Venus from that one up to the twenty-fourth century—to be continued by future astronomers in future almanacks. As it is not long, we give it here entire. The letters N. and S. appended to each date denote whether it is the northern or the southern hemisphere of the sun which will be traversed by the planet. What marvellous precision in the celestial movements! What a prodigious feat of science to be able to predict them!

4 December . . .	1639 . . .	S.
6 June . . . . .	1761 . . .	S.
3 June . . . . .	1769 . . .	N.
9 December . . .	1874 . . .	N.
6 December . . .	1882 . . .	S.
8 June . . . . .	2004 . . .	S.
5 June . . . . .	2012 . . .	N.
11 December . . .	2117 . . .	N.
8 December . . .	2125 . . .	S.
11 June . . . . .	2247 . . .	S.
9 June . . . . .	2255 . . .	N.
12 December . . .	2360 . . .	N.
10 December . . .	2368 . . .	S.

We herein remark that the transits of Venus, occurring in couples with an interval of eight

years between each transit, correspond alternately to the month of June and the month of December. The couples of transits are separated from each other by an interval of time which is alternately one hundred and five and one hundred and twenty-two years. They all take place shortly before one of the solstices—the winter or the summer solstice—a circumstance favourable for obtaining, by a wise selection of points of observation, very considerable differences in the duration of the phenomenon, as seen from those diverse distant localities.

The last observation (by English astronomers) is recorded in a prose idyll, to read which takes you back thousands of years in respect of facts, if not of time. A retrogression of a thousand years would hardly bring you to such a state of society as was found, then alive and in the flesh, in the enchanted isle of Otaheite. It was like finding some region where fossil plants still grow, and extinct animals still roam at liberty. Dear old Captain Cook, we retain your spelling as affectionately as we cherish your narratives. And unfortunately there are no more such islands to be discovered, nor ever will be—no more such romantic voyages to be written. No more sailors, landing at Botany Bay, will rush on board in a fright at having seen the devil (a kangaroo) with a body as big round as a barrel; no more savages will be found polite to sailors, believing them the representatives of the fair sex of England.

Cook might well call the hill where the observatory was fixed for watching the transit, "Venus Point." Those, indeed, were days of the Golden Age, inasmuch as his object in carrying out astronomers to Otaheite was, that, by observing the transit of Venus there, they might determine the sun's parallax with greater accuracy than heretofore.

The Sun plays so all-important a part in our existence, that the interest attached to the knowledge of his distance from the Earth is much greater than would appear at first sight, and considering it as a simple isolated fact. For that distance serves to estimate the distances of the heavenly bodies one from another. Consequently, at every epoch, astronomers have done their utmost to accomplish the measurement of this fundamental distance.

In order to find the length of any unknown distance, we must take some other length or distance which we do know, and find out how many times it is contained in the other. The known distance which we use as our measure, and which is called the *base* or the *unity* of our measurement, is divided, if required, into a certain number of equal parts, in case the distance to be measured should not contain it an exact number of times, and there should be a remainder, which, of course, would be less than the base or unity. Thus, to ascertain the length of a wall, or a piece of stuff, you apply a yard measure to it as many times as it will go; and then you measure the remainder, if there be any, by subdividing the yard into feet and inches. But

if we confined ourselves to the yard, or to any other single unity, for the measurement of all lengths, we should find much embarrassment in applying it either to enormous or to minute distances. With what precision can we figure to ourselves a billion of yards, or of the millionth part of a yard? We hear them named without their impressing us with any definite idea.

In order to avoid excessively large numbers leaving excessively small ones out of the question, as they do not concern us on the present occasion—we are obliged to replace the yard by a larger unity, when considerable distances have to be measured. Thus, roads are measured by the mile. But if the yard is inapplicable to the measurement of terrestrial distances, it is still more useless for such distances as from star to star. It is impossible to form any idea either of those distances or of their relative proportions amongst themselves, unless we start from some typical distance belonging to the same order of magnitude as themselves.

For ascertaining the dimensions of surrounding objects and their relative distances from each other, a very natural proceeding is to take, as a term of comparison and a unity of measurement, some one part of the human body. Such evidently was the origin of the unities of measurement known as "cubits," "feet," "palms," &c. For journeys by sea and land, recourse was had to unities of measure derived from the dimensions of the terrestrial globe; such as the ordinary league (the twenty-fifth part of a degree, which is the three hundred and sixtieth part of the Earth's circumference), and the marine league (the twentieth part of a degree). In these cases, the terrestrial globe is substituted for the human body, to serve as a term of comparison between the different distances travelled on its surface.

But if, from these terrestrial distances, we proceed to those which separate the stars, even those which are nearest to us (always excepting the Moon), the dimensions of our globe then become much too small to serve as the unity of measure for those enormous intervals of space. We can only form a clear notion of their relative lengths by comparing them with a unity of their own class. The distance which separates us from the Sun (for us the most influential of all the heavenly bodies) becomes, then, naturally the new term of comparison, the new unity of measurement which we are induced to adopt. The Sun's distance is determined by his parallax; and his parallax is expected to be still more accurately ascertained by observations of the promised transit of Venus.

Parallax is the angle formed by an object with two different observers placed at different stations. Thus, suppose this letter A to be greatly magnified, or to be traced on the surface of a ten-acre field; fix an object, as a flag-staff, at the apex, or top of the A, and an observer at each of its feet, the angle formed by the legs of the A will be, to them, the *parallax* of the flag-staff. It will hence be clear that the nearer an object is, the greater will be its parallax, the

position of the observers remaining the same. For instance, if the flag-staff were brought forward to the cross-bar of the A, the angle it would then form, with the observers at the feet, would be considerably greater than when it stood at the top of the letter. On the other hand, suppose the flag-staff removed to a great distance—say half a mile away—the angle, or parallax, would be enormously diminished, tapering almost to a needle's point.

When we have the whole Earth as our place of observation instead of a small ten-acre enclosure, and the heavenly bodies for objects instead of flag-staffs or trees, the *scale* is altered, but not the truth of the facts. Throughout the universe, all is relative. As on the Earth's surface objects may be so distant that their parallax for neighbouring observers is excessively small; so do there exist in open space visible objects removed from us by such enormous intervals that their parallax, seen, not only from any part of the Earth, but from any part of the Earth's orbit, is imperceptible. The fixed stars have no parallax for us. The dog star alone, the nearest and the brightest of them, is said to have a parallax, though of extremest smallness.

Of course it is only when parallax is perceptible that it can be made to serve as a measure of distance; and, unfortunately, the smaller it is, the greater is the difficulty of calculating it exactly. The parallax of some of the planets, in certain parts of their orbits, is quite appreciable. Mars, when on the same side of the Sun with ourselves and seen by observers placed at distant spots on the earth, say Paris and Cayenne, appears at the same moment to occupy different positions in the sky. The Sun, more distant, has a much smaller parallax, which is consequently more difficult of determination.

During every one of our waking hours, our unassisted eyes are continually noting the parallax of surrounding objects, without our having studied astronomy, and without our even being aware of it. We are trigonometricians in spite of ourselves. We unconsciously solve problems which, on a larger scale, mathematicians are proud to work out with much mental labour. Observe that I have written "eyes," in the plural, because a single eye cannot do the same thing.

This unsuspected, every-day process is one of the means by which we judge of distance:

You are comfortably sitting by the fire in your parlour; on the window-sill is a geranium in leaf; on the opposite side of the street or square is a house which probably has windows. Shut one eye, and bring one leaf of the geranium in exact line with one of the windows of the opposite house. Then, without stirring a hair's breadth if you can help it, open the closed eye and shut the open one. The leaf will no longer be in line with the distant window. Seen from a different point of view, it will be in line with something else. It is the combination of what is seen by each eye separately which gives their

relief and their perspective to the flat pictures seen in a stereoscope—an optical toy which is useless to a one-eyed man.

As the geranium leaf appears to each of our eyes separately to occupy a different position with reference to the window on the opposite side of the street, so does Venus, while making her transit across the Sun, appear to two distant observers on the surface of the Earth to occupy a different position with reference to the Sun. The marvel is that, from these apparently different positions, mathematicians should have deduced, with a wonderful approach to perfect precision, the enormous distance from the Earth to the Sun.

The admirable idea of calculating the Sun's parallax from observations of the transits of Venus is due to Halley. In 1678, while, still quite young, he was observing, in the Island of St. Helena, the stars surrounding the South Pole of the heavens (which, consequently, are invisible to us), when, happening to observe a passage of Mercury across the Sun, he was struck with the exactitude resulting from the observation of the beginning and the end of the phenomenon—the consequence of the formation or the rupture of a tiny thread of light between the disk of the planet and that of the Sun at the precise moment of the interior contact of the two disks. He immediately comprehended that from this class of observations the parallax of the Sun might be accurately deduced. But for that purpose he also saw it was very desirable that the intervening planet should be further away from the Sun than Mercury is, and nearer to the Earth. Venus satisfies this condition. He therefore worked out his original idea, applying it to the transits of Venus for determining the parallax of the Sun with a very close approximation to the truth, inasmuch as he believed that the error committed would not exceed the *five-hundredth* part of the real value.

Halley communicated his method to the world in 1691, in a Memoir which appeared in the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London, No. 193. He afterwards, in 1716, supplied to No. 348 of the same publication all the developments necessary to demonstrate its great importance. He even gave the instructions for applying his theory to the next expected transit of Venus, which would occur in the month of June, 1761. As Halley was then (1716) sixty years of age, he could have little hope of witnessing the results of his own discovery, which promised such excellent chances of success in determining the precise distance of the Sun from the Earth.

In what has been said, the distance from the Earth to the Sun is spoken of as a determinate, unchangeable quantity. We know, however, that that distance is constantly varying from day to day. The fact may be ascertained with the greatest facility by measuring the Sun's diameter at different seasons. This diameter,



as it alternately increases and diminishes, indicates that the Sun's distance is at the same time diminishing or increasing. The extremes of the Sun's apparent distances occur about the 1st of January and the 1st of July. The extreme distances bear to each other the proportions of one hundred and seventeen to one hundred and twenty-one. When, therefore, it is said that the distance of the Earth from the Sun serves as a unity of measure, the *mean value* of that distance (half the sum of the greatest and the smallest distances) will be understood to be thereby meant.

But while we are thus looking out for Venus, I wonder what the Venusians think of us. For they persist, in spite of the late Dr. Whewell, in maintaining the habitability of their globe. They are, moreover, thoroughbred Highlanders: our grandest landscapes are tame compared with theirs. Not only is their country mountainous, but they have mountains five times as high as our very highest, to which they retreat during the summer heats. Under the shadow of rocks taller than Chimborazo, they preserve their complexions from tanning by the sun. Themselves (according to Kircher's account) are universally handsome and young; how they dispose of the old and ugly he does not say. They are dressed in iridescent garments (shot silks?) and transparent gauzes, which reflect different hues with every play of light.

Better authorities tell us that Venus must be very much what Cook found Otaheite, with what Otaheite has not—glaciers fringed with tropical vegetation. There are brilliant seas, luxurious islands, rushing waterfalls, and refreshing winds—with a great probability of hurricanes, cyclones, and tornadoes upsetting everything. Although Venus has no moon of her own, Mercury, by his brightness and close vicinity, and Terra, by her magnitude, render the service of a couple of moons, and supply her scene-painters with charming effects. Still, the Earth's surface, nearly covered with seas and veiled in a cottony, cloudy winding-sheet, would be but a bad reflector of light, and offer but a dingy spectacle. Our moon would be a curiosity, certainly singular, but by no means brilliant. All things considered, there can be little doubt that the Venusians look down upon us with an eye of pity.

### MY FIRST TIGER.

No soldier who has made one of a well-organised shooting-party in India is likely to forget the feelings of pleasure and of real liberty with which he enjoyed his week or month's absence from duty. Talk of a hard-worked lawyer's annual holiday to Baden or Switzerland, it is not to be compared with the enjoyment of a month's shooting in India. In these days there is not a nook or corner of Europe—no, nor of many parts of Asia either—where you can get completely away from the worry and bother of every-day life. I know a large shareholder

in Overend, Gurney's unfortunate bank who heard of his ruin when he was on the banks of the Jordan, and another friend of mine got the news that his daughter had run away with a fellow not worth a shilling, whilst he, the honoured parent, was travelling in Bulgaria. In London we are always running a race against time, and constantly losing it. Not so in India. In that country, one day is so like another, there is so very little to do and so much time to do it in, that any change from cantonment life is accounted a godsend. Even the preparation for a month's campaign is no light matter, and the occupation it affords, for a fortnight or so before leaving the station, is not the least pleasing part of the undertaking. Tents have to be bought or hired; camels or carts to carry luggage must be provided; provisions for the party, and for the servants of the party, are laid in; guns and ammunition put in order; and a thousand things must be thought of which a "griffin," or new hand in the country, would never dream were necessary. In the present instance our party consisted of Captain Ring and myself, of my own regiment; Mr. Hogan and Mr. Anger, of the Civil Service; with Major Aster, of the staff, and Dr. Hoxon, an assistant-surgeon of horse artillery. After the custom and fashion of Bengal, the native servants of these gentlemen numbered more than a hundred and fifty souls, and this without including such temporary followers as might join our camp from any of the villages we passed near. Those who have never been in the East may wonder at such an immense following; but when I enumerate the servants which each *saib* (gentleman) is obliged to keep in that country, their surprise will cease. For instance, I had to look after me—or rather for me to look after—a "kitmagar," or table-servant, a Moslem, whose sole duty it was to wait upon me at breakfast, luncheon, and dinner. Next was a "bearer," a Hindoo, who looked after my clothes, and acted as bed-maker. The third servant in social position was a *masaulchie*, or lamp-trimmer; the fourth, a *dhobie*, or washerman (no *dhobie* would dream of washing for two masters); the fifth, a sweeper; and though last, not least, each of my three horses had a *syce*, or groom, and a grasscutter—six servants connected with my stables, and five for myself, or eleven in all. Suppose each of the party to have had the same, this would have made sixty-six servants. But having fewer horses than the others, I had also fewer servants, so that the personal following of the party may be safely set down as eighty individuals. To these must be added a cook, with two assistants, a butcher, and six tent-pitchers that were in the general pay of the party, and the wives of more than half the servants, who accompanied their lords to the jungle, many of them having two and three children. Besides there were the camel-drivers; the gharry, or cart-drivers; the mahouts, or men in charge of the half-dozen elephants lent us by the Commissariat Department, each elephant having two men to cut forage for

him, besides his drivers. And it is a curious fact that, in India, the lower the "caste" of the individual, the greater the number of children he is certain to have. Captain Ring and myself had between us seven horses; these necessitated seven syces, or grooms, and seven grass-cutters—fourteen men, eleven of whom had wives, and having amongst them twenty-eight children. When these various figures and facts are taken into consideration, it will not be deemed surprising that our following in this camp amounted to upwards of a hundred and fifty souls.

All our arrangements being ready, the servants, camp equipage, baggage, spare horses, and everything which we did not want with us was sent on ahead, with orders to form our camp at a village about fifty miles from Meerut. At certain stations on the road, about twelve or fifteen miles apart from each other, a groom with a horse belonging to each of our party was to stop, so that we might ride through without stopping, and have a change of mounts on the road. We started the day our leave of absence commenced, and in about seven hours from the time we left the cantonment we found ourselves in our camp, which was pitched under a grove of trees, and in the immediate neighbourhood of what Orientals value above all other things—a running stream of good water.

To an Englishman fond of out-door sports, and yet, to a certain degree, liking his personal comfort, I cannot imagine anything more "jolly" than a sporting camp in India. When we arrived, the servants had had plenty of time to get everything ready. Each of us had a good single-poled tent, some sixteen feet square, with double roof and double walls. Round each such tent there was a cluster of smaller tents, in which the owner's servants lived. Close behind these were his horses. A little way off, in the middle of the camp, was the mess-tent, in which we intended to breakfast, lunch, and dine, during our sojourn in the jungle. On the outskirts of the camp were the half-dozen temporary huts erected by the grain-sellers, sweetmeat-vendors, and other natives, who had followed us from Meerut, determined to attach themselves to our camp, and supply our servants during the month we were to be away from cantonments. We got to camp in time for luncheon, and passed the afternoon in making preparations for whatever sport the next day might afford; for as yet no certain news of any tiger being in the vicinity had been received, and our head shikarie—the individual whose perilous office it is to wander far and near, in order to find out where sport is to be had—was still absent.

That evening old Hassein, the shikarie, returned to camp, and brought us news—"kubber," as it is called in Anglo-Indian jargon—of a more hopeful character than is common at the outset of a shooting-party. A tiger had been lately seen at a village only two coss (or four miles) off. The animal was by no means apocryphal, for Hassein had himself seen it that very morning. The villagers themselves had not been molested by the brute; but it had

destroyed three or four of their cattle, which was a serious loss to them. Its lair was not known, but it had been seen regularly to come morning and evening to a certain pool to drink; and Hassein recommended that we should start from camp about two hours before daybreak, so as to reach the spot and be ready when the animal appeared, as is the nature of its kind, to drink as soon as there is daylight enough to see any distance.

As a matter of course, this news created not a little stir among us. I can see our party now, and remember each incident that occurred, although it is more than twenty years since the events I am relating happened. We sat in various positions, and vested in curious shooting-jackets and other garments, smoking our after-dinner cigars, questioning and listening to Hassein's tale. Poor old fellow!

Long before we went to bed all our arrangements were made. There was a good, well-tried sporting elephant for each of the party; all of them, with the exception of myself, had more than once assisted at the death of a tiger. Our camp we left standing where it was, for we expected to be back before breakfast. A little after two A.M. Hassein went round our tents and awoke us, and by three o'clock we were fully under way. I, being the only young hand of the party, was entrusted especially to the care of the shikarie, who arranged to accompany me on my elephant, and thus I was pretty sure of having a good place when we got to the ground. So far as I could understand—for the old fellow's English was limited, and of Hindostanee I could only speak a very few words—from what Hassein told me on our way to the scene of action, he did not hope to get within shot of the tiger whilst the latter was at the pool, but to be able to trace the beast from thence to its usual haunts, and then beat it up in the usual manner. The tiger, as he informed me, was one which "got a madam," meaning thereby that it had, probably, a female and cubs, and could not wander very far from where the latter were to be found.

On our way to the ground, however, Hassein changed his plans. He stopped the elephants that were plodding along, each one with a sportsman and his battery of rifles on its back, and, after a long conference in Hindostanee with the rest of the party, I was told that we were to leave our elephants and proceed on foot—I being, as before, under the special care of the shikarie. The mahouts in charge of the elephants had orders to remain where they were, but to come towards us quickly the moment they heard a shot fired. After about a quarter of an hour's quick walking, we arrived at a tope, or clump of trees, situated, so far as I could judge in the moonlight, about sixty yards from a large pool of shallow water. Two of the party—Captain Ring and Mr. Hogan, who were the best shots—he placed behind a large boulder of rock, which commanded a good view of the pool, but was at least eighty yards from it; three more he placed in different trees of the small grove, whilst the "chota saib," or youngster (meaning myself),

he took with him to the tree which was nearest the pool, and at the same time was least high from the ground, and, consequently, easiest to shoot from. These various arrangements took some little time, and they were barely complete when Hassein, who was standing on a branch just below me, pinched my arm, and, pointing with his chin to the east, made me see that the first peep of dawn was colouring the horizon. "Soon him come."

Nor had we long to wait. In the dim grey of the morning—the moon having gone down since we arrived—I could make out that there was an animal drinking at the pool; but it might have been a calf, a colt—anything. It certainly looked much smaller than I had expected to see a Bengal royal tiger; and it was not until Hassein had again and again declared it to be "him tiger," that I believed I saw my first tiger in the jungles. Hassein feared that, in my anxiety to kill, I should fire before I could see the animal well, and thus frighten him away without any of the others of the party getting a shot at him. However, the light was getting stronger every moment, and, as I very soon felt calm and self-possessed enough to take aim, I quickly cocked my single-barrelled rifle, which carried a two-ounce ball, and which I had already sighted for as near the distance as I could guess. The only fear I felt was lest some of my companions should shoot before me, and kill the brute before I could do so. This thought no doubt flurried me a little, but otherwise no more certain aim was ever taken from behind gun or rifle than I then took. Just as I was about to pull the trigger, the tiger looked up from drinking, moved a little way further into the pool, and brought his broadside nearly full to me. This, of course, made my shot all the easier, and gave me fresh courage. I aimed direct at the shoulder, and the fearful roar that followed told me plainer than any words could that I had not missed the brute.

But I had neither killed, nor even disabled, the tiger to the extent of hindering him from getting away. In a moment, and repeating again and again the tremendous roar, he had turned and was making off. As he did so, two shots rang out from the rock where my brother-officer and his companion were stationed. So far as I could judge, the first of them missed him, but the second stopped him. He stumbled forward, as a horse that has put his foot on a rolling stone might do. But in a moment he was up again, and I could now see that he dragged one of his hind legs behind him, evidently broken, whilst with one of his fore legs he limped in great pain and badly hurt. A moment more, and he was hid from our sight by some thick underwood.

Like most young sportsmen I was rash enough to wish to follow him on foot, but Captain Ring, who was, by common consent, the leader of the party, would not listen to such folly. He insisted upon waiting until the elephants came up, and then tracking the animal to his lair. A wounded tiger is not a pleasant creature to meet, the more so as you can

never know when he may spring out upon you. Captain Ring was by far too old a hand at tiger-shooting, and had witnessed too many accidents, to be rash on these occasions. The mahouts, moreover, had been on the alert, and at the first sound of our firing had made towards the spot where we were, so that in less than a quarter of an hour after the tiger had departed we were after him.

The greatest possible caution was needful in moving through the now very thick jungle. Hassein seemed, however, from instinct, to know the direction the animal had taken, and very soon we could perceive every here and there large fresh drops of blood, showing that the beast had been badly hit, and indicating very plainly that the old fellow was right. But the vitality of tigers is something wonderful. Any kind of cat will live when he has gone through what would kill most animals. As we followed, Hassein, who was sitting behind me on my elephant, got more and more excited, and kept warning the party to look out, for the tiger could not be far off. Still it was a tail chase, and as every now and then we lost the trail, the animal had plenty of time to forge ahead. At last, a perfect scream from the old fellow behind made me turn round, and there he was frantically pointing to an almost perpendicular piece of rock, about six hundred yards to our right, up which the tiger was scrambling. A very few minutes brought us to the spot, but only to find that the wounded animal had taken refuge in a cave, the entrance of which was about twenty feet high, and perfectly inaccessible to a man, unless he crawled to it on his hands and knees.

Here, then, we held a council of war. To return to camp without the tiger for which we had worked so hard was out of the question; but it seemed still more impossible to ascend to the cave to put the poor brute out of his misery. We were well provided with fireworks, and these we now began to use, keeping up at the same time a fire into the cave, so as to force the tiger to break cover. That he was inside the place there could be no doubt, for every now and then we heard a suppressed growl, as if our bullets, although fired at random, had touched him. But after a time this ceased, and we began to think that some of our shots must have finished him. Still the risk of going up to the mouth of the cave, and looking in to see whether he was alive, was greater than any sane man would have encountered, and we were seriously thinking of going back to camp, when all of a sudden an end was put to our doubts.

For some time Hassein had been getting more and more excited. At last he seemed almost frantic with rage, at the idea that the tiger would escape us. He roared out that he would ascend to the cave, and see for himself whether the brute was dead. In vain did Captain Ring and the rest of the party try to dissuade him—even to order him not to go. The old fellow's blood was up, and he would listen to nothing. He divested himself of every article of clothing, except a pair of short low drawers and

the linen skull-cap which he wore under his turban, and taking his large native hunting-knife in his mouth, so that both hands might be free, commenced to climb up the rock, whilst at a distance of thirty yards we sat on elephants, rifles ready cocked in hand, watching him.

The intense anxiety and excitement of the next five minutes I shall never forget. Again and again did we call upon the old fellow to come back, but he paid no attention. More than once, in trying to get up the steep rock, he slipped. At last he reached the small ledge in front of the cave, and putting aside the brushwood began to peep in. All at once, with a roar like thunder, the tiger sprang out, and, to us who were watching closely, the brute seemed merely to brush past old Hassein, and to put him aside as it sprang upon the ground below. It never paused for an instant.

As the tiger touched the earth, not ten yards from my elephant, a shot from Captain Ring's rifle turned it over stone dead. We observed that Hassein lay at the mouth of the cave, still on his knees, but with his head and the upper part of his body bent forward, as if he had received a severe blow, and was stunned by it. Two of the natives who were with us sprang up the rock to assist the old fellow down. Alas! they found that he was dead. His skull had been crushed just as an egg is chipped by an egg-spoon. The doctor who was with us said that his death must have been instantaneous, and this merely by the passing blow of the tiger's fore paw. There were no marks of scratches about the head; it was beaten in as if by a sledge-hammer.

We took the body back to camp, and the next day had it buried according to the usual Moslem rites at the nearest village. On inquiry, it was found that the poor old fellow had left a widow and two children. For them we raised, amongst those who had known Hassein, a subscription of three hundred pounds, which, being invested in house property at Meerut, gives his family twenty rupees, or two pounds sterling, a month, and is to them an ample fortune.

## GEORGE SILVERMAN'S EXPLANATION.

By CHARLES DICKENS.

IN NINE CHAPTERS. FIRST CHAPTER.

It happened in this wise:

—But, sitting with my pen in my hand looking at those words again, without describing any hint in them of the words that should follow, it comes into my mind that they have an abrupt appearance. They may serve, however, if I let them remain, to suggest how very difficult I find it to begin to explain my Explanation. An uncouth phrase: and yet I do not see my way to a better.

SECOND CHAPTER.

It happened in *this* wise:

—But, looking at those words, and comparing them with my former opening, I find they

are the self-same words repeated. This is the more surprising to me, because I employ them in quite a new connexion. For indeed I declare that my intention was to discard the commencement I first had in my thoughts, and to give the preference to another of an entirely different nature, dating my explanation from an anterior period of my life. I will make a third trial, without erasing this second failure, protesting that it is not my design to conceal any of my infirmities, whether they be of head or heart.

### THIRD CHAPTER.

Nor as yet directly aiming at how it came to pass, I will come upon it by degrees. The natural manner after all, for God knows that is how it came upon me!

My parents were in a miserable condition of life, and my infant home was a cellar in Preston. I recollect the sound of Father's Lancashire clogs on the street pavement above, as being different in my young hearing from the sound of all other clogs; and I recollect that when Mother came down the cellar-steps, I used tremblingly to speculate on her feet having a good or an ill tempered look—on her knees—on her waist—until finally her face came into view and settled the question. From this it will be seen that I was timid, and that the cellar-steps were steep, and that the doorway was very low.

Mother had the gripe and clutch of Poverty upon her face, upon her figure, and not least of all upon her voice. Her sharp and high-pitched words were squeezed out of her, as by the compression of bony fingers on a leathern bag, and she had a way of rolling her eyes about and about the cellar, as she scolded, that was gaunt and hungry. Father, with his shoulders rounded, would sit quiet on a three-legged stool, looking at the empty grate, until she would pluck the stool from under him, and bid him go bring some money home. Then he would dismally ascend the steps, and I, holding my ragged shirt and trousers together with a hand (my only braces), would feint and dodge from Mother's pursuing grasp at my hair.

A worldly little devil was Mother's usual name for me. Whether I cried for that I was in the dark, or for that it was cold, or for that I was hungry, or whether I squeezed myself into a warm corner when there was a fire, or ate voraciously when there was food, she would still say: "O you worldly little devil!" And the sting of it was, that I quite well knew myself to be a worldly little devil. Worldly as to wanting to be housed and warmed, worldly as to wanting to be fed, worldly as to the greed with which I inwardly compared how much I got of those good things with how much Father and Mother got, when, rarely, those good things were going.

Sometimes they both went away seeking work, and then I would be locked up in the cellar for a day or two at a time. I was at my worldliest then. Left alone, I yielded myself up to a worldly yearning for enough of anything (except misery), and for the death of Mother's father,



who was a machine-maker at Birmingham, and on whose decease I had heard Mother say she would come into a whole court-full of houses "if she had her rights." Worldly little devil, I would stand about, musingly fitting my cold bare feet into cracked bricks and crevices of the damp cellar-floor—walking over my grandfather's body, so to speak, into the court-full of houses, and selling them for meat and drink and clothes to wear.

At last a change came down into our cellar. The universal change came down even as low as that—so will it mount to any height on which a human creature can perch—and brought other changes with it.

We had a heap of I don't know what foul litter in the darkest corner, which we called "the bed." For three days Mother lay upon it without getting up, and then began at times to laugh. If I had ever heard her laugh before, it had been so seldom that the strange sound frightened me. It frightened Father, too, and we took it by turns to give her water. Then she began to move her head from side to side, and sing. After that, she getting no better, Father fell a-laughing and a-singing, and then there was only I to give them both water, and they both died.

#### FOURTH CHAPTER.

WHEN I was lifted out of the cellar by two men, of whom one came peeping down alone first, and ran away and brought the other, I could hardly bear the light of the street. I was sitting in the roadway, blinking at it, and at a ring of people collected around me, but not close to me, when, true to my character of worldly little devil, I broke silence by saying, "I am hungry and thirsty!"

"Does he know they are dead?" asked one of another.

"Do you know your father and mother are both dead of fever?" asked a third of me, severely.

"I don't know what it is to be dead. I supposed it meant that, when the cup rattled against their teeth and the water spilt over them. I am hungry and thirsty." That was all I had to say about it.

The ring of people widened outward from the inner side as I looked around me; and I smelt vinegar, and what I now know to be camphor, thrown in towards where I sat. Presently some one put a great vessel of smoking vinegar on the ground near me, and then they all looked at me in silent horror as I ate and drank of what was brought for me. I knew at the time they had a horror of me, but I couldn't help it.

I was still eating and drinking, and a murmur of discussion had begun to arise respecting what was to be done with me next, when I heard a cracked voice somewhere in the ring say: "My name is Hawkyard, Mr. Verity Hawkyard, of West Bromwich." Then the ring split in one place, and a yellow-faced peak-nosed gentleman, clad all in iron-grey to his gaiters, pressed forward with a policeman and another official of some sort. He came forward close to

the vessel of smoking vinegar; from which he sprinkled himself carefully, and me copiously.

"He had a grandfather at Birmingham, this young boy: who is just dead, too," said Mr. Hawkyard.

I turned my eyes upon the speaker, and said in a ravening manner: "Where's his houses?"

"Hah! Horrible worldliness on the edge of the grave," said Mr. Hawkyard, casting more of the vinegar over me, as if to get my devil out of me. "I have undertaken a slight—a very slight—trust in behalf of this boy; quite a voluntary trust; a matter of mere honour, if not of mere sentiment; still I have taken it upon myself, and it shall be (O yes, it shall be!) discharged."

The bystanders seemed to form an opinion of this gentleman, much more favourable than their opinion of me.

"He shall be taught," said Mr. Hawkyard " (O yes, he shall be taught!); but what is to be done with him for the present? He may be infected. He may disseminate infection." The ring widened considerably. "What is to be done with him?"

He held some talk with the two officials. I could distinguish no word save "Farm-house." There was another sound several times repeated, which was wholly meaningless in my ears then, but which I knew soon afterwards to be "Hoghton Towers."

"Yes," said Mr. Hawkyard, "I think that sounds promising. I think that sounds hopeful. And he can be put by himself in a Ward, for a night or two, you say?"

It seemed to be the police-officer who had said so, for it was he who replied Yes. It was he, too, who finally took me by the arm and walked me before him through the streets, into a whitewashed room in a bare building, where I had a chair to sit in, a table to sit at, an iron bedstead and good mattress to lie upon, and a rug and blanket to cover me. Where I had enough to eat, too, and was shown how to clean the tin porringer in which it was conveyed to me, until it was as good as a looking-glass. Here, likewise, I was put in a bath, and had new clothes brought to me, and my old rags were burnt, and I was camphored and vinegared, and disinfected in a variety of ways.

When all this was done—I don't know in how many days or how few, but it matters not—Mr. Hawkyard stepped in at the door, remaining close to it, and said:

"Go and stand against the opposite wall, George Silverman. As far off as you can. That'll do. How do you feel?"

I told him that I didn't feel cold, and didn't feel hungry, and didn't feel thirsty. That was the whole round of human feelings, as far as I knew, except the pain of being beaten.

"Well," said he, "you are going, George, to a healthy farm-house to be purified. Keep in the air there, as much as you can. Live an out-of-door life there, until you are fetched away. You had better not say much—in fact, you had better be very careful not to say anything—about what your parents died of, or they might not

like to take you in. Behave well, and I'll put you to school (O yes, I'll put you to school!), though I am not obligated to do it. I am a servant of the Lord, George, and I have been a good servant to him (I have!) these five-and-thirty years. The Lord has had a good servant in me, and he knows it."

What I then supposed him to mean by this, I cannot imagine. As little do I know when I began to comprehend that he was a prominent member of some obscure denomination or congregation, every member of which held forth to the rest when so inclined, and among whom he was called Brother Hawkyard. It was enough for me to know, on that day in the Ward, that the farmer's cart was waiting for me at the street corner. I was not slow to get into it, for it was the first ride I ever had in my life.

It made me sleepy, and I slept. First, I stared at Preston streets as long as they lasted, and, meanwhile, I may have had some small dumb wondering within me whereabouts our cellar was. But I doubt it. Such a worldly little devil was I, that I took no thought who would bury Father and Mother, or where they would be buried, or when. The question whether the eating and drinking by day, and the covering by night, would be as good at the farm-house as at the Ward, superseded those questions.

The jolting of the cart on a loose stony road awoke me, and I found that we were mounting a steep hill, where the road was a rutty by-road through a field. And so, by fragments of an ancient terrace, and by some rugged outbuildings that had once been fortified, and passing under a ruined gateway, we came to the old farm-house in the thick stone wall outside the old quadrangle of Hoghton Towers. Which I looked at, like a stupid savage; seeing no speciality in; seeing no antiquity in; assuming all farm-houses to resemble it; assigning the decay I noticed, to the one potent cause of all ruin that I knew—Poverty; eyeing the pigeons in their flights, the cattle in their stalls, the ducks in the pond, and the fowls pecking about the yard, with a hungry hope that plenty of them might be killed for dinner while I stayed there; wondering whether the scrubbed dairy vessels drying in the sunlight could be the goodly porringers out of which the master ate his belly-filling food, and which he polished when he had done, according to my Ward experience; shrinkingly doubtful whether the shadows passing over that airy height on the bright spring day were not something in the nature of frowns; sordid, afraid, unadmiring, a small Brute to shudder at.

To that time I had never had the faintest impression of beauty. I had had no knowledge whatever that there was anything lovely in this life. When I had occasionally slunk up the cellar-steps into the street and glared in at shop-windows, I had done so with no higher feelings than we may suppose to animate a mangey young dog or wolf-cub. It is equally the fact that I had never been alone, in the sense of holding unselfish converse with myself. I had been solitary often enough, but nothing better.

Such was my condition when I sat down to my dinner, that day, in the kitchen of the old farm-house. Such was my condition when I lay on my bed in the old farm-house that night, stretched out opposite the narrow mullioned window, in the cold light of the moon, like a young Vampire.

#### FIFTH CHAPTER.

WHAT do I know, now, of Hoghton Towers? Very little, for I have been gratefully unwilling to disturb my first impressions. A house, centuries old, on high ground a mile or so removed from the road between Preston and Blackburn, where the first James of England in his hurry to make money by making Baronets, perhaps, made some of those remunerative dignitaries. A house, centuries old, deserted and falling to pieces, its woods and gardens long since grass land or ploughed up, the rivers Ribble and Darwen glancing below it, and a vague haze of smoke against which not even the supernatural prescience of the first Stuart could foresee a Counterblast, hinting at Steam Power, powerful in two distances.

What did I know, then, of Hoghton Towers? When I first peeped in at the gate of the lifeless quadrangle, and started from the mouldering statue becoming visible to me like its Guardian Ghost; when I stole round by the back of the farm-house and got in among the ancient rooms, many of them with their floors and ceilings falling, the beams and rafters hanging dangerously down, the plaster dropping as I trod, the oaken panels stripped away, the windows half walled up, half broken; when I discovered a gallery commanding the old kitchen, and looked down between balustrades upon a massive old table and benches, fearing to see I know not what dead-alive creatures come in and seat themselves and look up with I know not what dreadful eyes, or lack of eyes, at me; when all over the house I was awed by gaps and chinks where the sky stared sorrowfully at me, where the birds passed, and the ivy rustled, and the stains of winter weather blotched the rotten floors; when down at the bottom of dark pits of staircase into which the stairs had sunk, green leaves trembled, butterflies fluttered, and bees hummed in and out through the broken doorways; when encircling the whole ruin were sweet scents and sights of fresh green growth and ever-renewing life, that I had never dreamed of;—I say, when I passed into such clouded perception of these things as my dark soul could compass, what did I know then of Hoghton Towers?

I have written that the sky stared sorrowfully at me. Therein have I anticipated the answer. I knew that all these things looked sorrowfully at me. That they seemed to sigh or whisper, not without pity for me: "Alas! poor worldly little devil!"

There were two or three rats at the bottom of one of the smaller pits of broken staircase when I craned over and looked in. They were scuffling for some prey that was there. And when

they started and hid themselves, close together in the dark, I thought of the old life (it had grown old already) in the cellar.

How not to be this worldly little devil? How not to have a repugnance towards myself as I had towards the rats? I hid in a corner of one of the smaller chambers, frightened at myself and crying (it was the first time I had ever cried for any cause not purely physical), and I tried to think about it. One of the farm-ploughs came into my range of view just then, and it seemed to help me as it went on with its two horses up and down the field so peacefully and quietly.

There was a girl of about my own age in the farm-house family, and she sat opposite to me at the narrow table at meal-times. It had come into my mind at our first dinner, that she might take the fever from me. The thought had not disquieted me then; I had only speculated how she would look under the altered circumstances, and whether she would die. But it came into my mind now, that I might try to prevent her taking the fever, by keeping away from her. I knew I should have but scrambling board, if I did; so much the less worldly and less devilish the deed would be, I thought.

From that hour I withdrew myself at early morning into secret corners of the ruined house, and remained hidden there until she went to bed. At first, when meals were ready, I used to hear them calling me; and then my resolution weakened. But I strengthened it again, by going further off into the ruin and getting out of hearing. I often watched for her at the dim windows; and, when I saw that she was fresh and rosy, felt much happier.

Out of this holding her in my thoughts, to the humanising of myself, I suppose some childish love arose within me. I felt in some sort dignified by the pride of protecting her, by the pride of making the sacrifice for her. As my heart swelled with that new feeling, it insensibly softened about Mother and Father. It seemed to have been frozen before, and now to be thawed. The old ruin and all the lovely things that haunted it were not sorrowful for me only, but sorrowful for Mother and Father as well. Therefore did I cry again, and often too.

The farm-house family conceived me to be of a morose temper, and were very short with me: though they never stinted me in such broken fare as was to be got, out of regular hours. One night when I lifted the kitchen latch at my usual time, Sylvia (that was her pretty name) had but just gone out of the room. Seeing her ascending the opposite stairs, I stood still at the door. She had heard the clink of the latch, and looked round.

"George," she called to me, in a pleased voice: "to-morrow is my birthday, and we are to have a fiddler, and there's a party of boys and girls coming in a cart, and we shall dance. I invite you. Be sociable for once, George."

"I am very sorry, miss," I answered, "but I— but no; I can't come."

"You are a disagreeable, ill-humoured lad," she returned, disdainfully, "and I ought not to have asked you. I shall never speak to you again."

As I stood with my eyes fixed on the fire after she was gone, I felt that the farmer bent his brows upon me.

"Eh, lad," said he, "Sylvy's right. You're as moody and broody a lad as never I set eyes on yet!"

I tried to assure him that I meant no harm; but he only said, coldly: "Maybe not, maybe not. There! Get thy supper, get thy supper, and then thou canst sulk to thy heart's content again."

Ah! If they could have seen me next day in the ruin, watching for the arrival of the cart full of merry young guests; if they could have seen me at night, gliding out from behind the ghostly statue, listening to the music and the fall of dancingfeet, and watching the lighted farm-house windows from the quadrangle when all the ruin was dark; if they could have read my heart as I crept up to bed by the back way, comforting myself with the reflection, "They will take no hurt from me;" they would not have thought mine a morose or an unsocial nature!

It was in these ways that I began to form a shy disposition; to be of a timidly silent character under misconstruction; to have an inexpressible, perhaps a morbid, dread of ever being sordid or worldly. It was in these ways that my nature came to shape itself to such a mould, even before it was affected by the influences of the studious and retired life of a poor scholar.

#### A "SEAT" OF THEATRICALS.

WHEN I was at school, I used to learn out of a geography-book that such and such towns were the "seats" of this or that trade. When Leeds was flung at me interrogatively from the magisterial desk, I, having faithfully learned my lesson, promptly replied, "A town in Yorkshire, a great seat of the woollen trade." I wondered vaguely what sort of a seat Leeds was, and how the woollen trade sat down upon it.

I forget what the geography-book said Liverpool was, but if, after personal observation of the town, on various occasions, the question were put to me, I should answer, "Liverpool, town in Lancashire, a great seat of theatricals." I have been many times in Liverpool; but I cannot call to mind that I ever went there without, on the evening of my arrival, making the round of the theatres, and finding myself, immediately after breakfast on the following morning, standing on the stage of one or other of them, witnessing a rehearsal. The rest of the day has generally been spent in lunching with one manager, dining with a second, and supping with a third. Seeing Liverpool through this "medium," witnessing scenes of three or four different pieces performed by as many separate and distinct companies in one night, viewing, in my

rapid passage from one theatre to another, flaming playbills on every adjacent wall, listening all day to tales of past theatrical successes and brilliant theatrical projects for the future, I have come to regard Liverpool as a town where the energies of the people are wholly absorbed in theatricals, where the inhabitants are divided into two classes—those who get up and act plays, and those who go to see them.

When I enter my hotel, I feel that I am merely entering it to dress for the theatre. When I encounter in the street waggons laden with cotton, I have no other idea in connexion with the soft white raw material protruding from the bales, except that it has been grown, and is now about to be spun and woven into a fabric, expressly to form drops, and “clothes,” and wings, and sky-borders, and green banks, and sea-pieces for the theatres. When I see people coming down in the morning on omnibuses, I conceive that they are all going to rehearsals. When, taking a walk in Bold-street, I notice that there are shops of all kinds there, doing a brisk business, the same notion pursues me. The laces, and flowers, and gloves, and boots those ladies are buying, what can they be for, but to be worn at the theatre? Why are those gentlemen buying shirts, and neckties, and patent-leather boots? That they may shine in the stalls. Gibus hats are being bought, to be folded up in private boxes; bonbons, to be munched in dress circles. And can there be a doubt that tea and sugar, eggs and bacon, are going off to satisfy the cravings of those who desire a comfortable meal before proceeding to the pit? The toy-shop does not put me out at all. How are the children to be amused until it be time to go to the play? Nor does the stationer’s. How is a man to write for orders without paper, pens, and ink? Nor does the water-proofer’s. If any of the male inhabitants, having business in Birkenhead—in connexion with the new theatre there—were to cross the Mersey in such a wet day as this—and it is always wet in Liverpool—without a mackintosh or a patent symphonia, they would assuredly catch cold and be unable to go to the theatre on their return. And why do those tradesmen, those mercers, and lacemen, and glovers, and tailors, and hatters, and grocers, and the rest, stand all day behind counters and sell their wares? Why! That they may earn money to pay for places at the theatre, that they may “have the evening” to enjoy the representation of the works of Shakespeare and other more or less—on the whole, less—immortal dramatic bards.

Liverpool was my first baiting-place on my autumnal ride for the Health Cup. I intended merely to rub down, bait, sleep, and start again; but I had scarcely begun to rub down when the ostler—waiter, I mean—brought me a card. On it was inscribed the name of one of the Liverpool “managers.”

I pause here to remark that the word manager, when it stands alone, is universally accepted as meaning the conductor of a theatre. There are managers of banks, and firms, and railways,

and works of all kinds; but when you say *a* manager, *a* becomes for the nonce a definite article, and you mean the great man who is sole lessee and director of a temple of the drama. And it may be remarked that the manager generally comports himself in his temple as if he were the god of it. After the queen, I know no individual in the state who enjoys so high and unapproachable a position as the manager of a theatre. Write to the prime minister, seated in Downing-street, managing that vast empire on which the sun never sets, and by return of post you will receive from his secretary a courteous reply, perhaps not accepting your farce—I mean your scheme for the extinction of the national debt—but at least acknowledging your favour. Write to a manager of a theatre, governing a world comprised within four dingy brick walls, and having for his subjects—over whom he rules despotically—a leading man, a leading lady, a singing chambermaid, a low comedian, six or eight male and female general utilities, a dozen supers at a shilling a night, a prompter, and a mangy bear of a doorkeeper—write to this mighty potentate, and you are treated with the silence and contempt which are due to your audacity and presumption. Being a disappointed dramatic author—all dramatic authors are disappointed—I hold these views with regard to managers as a matter of course. Injury is the badge of all our tribe. What if they have accepted my farces? they have rejected my tragedies; what if they have accepted my tragedies? they have declined to give me my price. Judge, then, of my wonder and surprise when I, who had been so often sent away, with a rejected manuscript, from the stage-door, who had written so many letters destined never to be answered, was actually waited upon by a manager, coming to me frankly and fearlessly of his own accord. I was beginning to think it a most extraordinary circumstance, when I suddenly remembered that the manager waiting below was a provincial one, that he was a dramatic author, and that he was new to his dignity. As a provincial manager, he might have some respect for an author, not because he was an author, but because he was fresh from London; as an author himself, he might have some fellow-feeling, though I have observed that that soon wears off; and as having only recently become a manager, it was not to be expected that he should yet know to the full extent what was due to him.

However, there he was at the foot of the stairs, smiling and extending a friendly hand. The proceeding was altogether so unsophisticated, that I could scarcely forbear giving him a bit of advice. I was just about to say to him, “My dear sir, this is most imprudent of you—most dangerous. You should never, now that you are a manager, call upon an author. You put yourself at a disadvantage by so doing. What if at this friendly moment the fellow should, from his breast-pocket, produce a piece? At an hotel, too, where you might



be inveigled into partaking of the flowing bowl, there is no knowing but that under the generous influence of liquor you might 'see' that notion of his and accept it." Further, I would have said, "When you see an author—if you ever should consent to see one—give him an interview in your own business-room, and don't have a fire. Chill him by cold words, an empty grate, and the sight of a cartload of rejected manuscripts." If I refrained from giving my young friend this lecture, it was in the belief that he would learn it all from experience in due time.

"Come and see my theatre," he said, when the greetings were over.

"With all heart," I replied, and away we went.

How eagerly, with what a quick step, he led me to the well-remembered place! Anxious, I see, to show me the wonders of his world. I quite envy him as he skips up the box-stairs, past money and check takers, without pausing either to pay or to parley. Fancy bouncing into a theatre that way, all the officials clearing out of your path and touching their hats to you! The money-taker is a little doubtful about me, until my friend, the manager, gives him a nod, when he lets me pass, somewhat sulkily, as if he felt it was not right to let everybody bounce up the stairs in that fashion. My friend takes a great bunch of keys from his pocket—the keys of those gates of Delight, the private boxes, and the private door through to the stage—that mysterious little closed portal which we meaner mortals gaze at with so much awe when we pass down to the stalls. I begin to regard my friend as a sort of St. Peter.

He takes me into the manager's box—sacred place—and bids me look at the—not the stage, the pride of the manager is upon him now—at the house. "Look, look," he says, "at the gallery—at the pit—at the boxes—at the stalls." A brave "house" truly, a sight to do a manager's heart good. But, dear, dear, how our notions change! I have known the time when my friend had no eyes but for the stage. Now he turns his back to the stage, and gazes with beaming eyes upon the "house;" upon those unwashed noisy boys in the gallery. In other times, when he was a dramatic author pure and simple—very simple—he would have cursed those noisy gallery boys. But now he doesn't mind their noise at all; he is thinking of their sixpences.

When I am permitted to look at the stage, I see a performance quite up to the London mark in all its leading features. The scenery, dresses, properties, and appointments strike me as being superior to the general run of such things in the great centre. But, just as I am getting interested in the play, I am hurried away to see another theatre. If I were not being hurried along so, I am sure I should be struck with awe. Just fancy holding the keys—all the keys—of two theatres. I am gasping out in an apostrophe to my friend, "Great Being," when he opens the door of the manager's box, pushes me in and says:

"Look at the house! look at the gallery! look at the pit! look at the boxes!" He cannot say, look at the stalls, for there are none; but I notice that he always begins with the gallery first. O ye gods, seated in the worst seats, placed at the greatest distance from the stage, offensively kept in awe by policemen, insulted by printed intimations not to whistle and crack nuts—did ye but know your value, your virtue in the eyes of the manager! Hereditary bondsmen, know ye not that you are the thews and sinews of the theatrical land; that ye are the mainstay and support of the state dramatic; that in your dirty shirt-sleeves, with all your nut-cracking, and whistling, and "up with them borders," ye are more loved by the manager than all those genteel people in the upper boxes, with opera-cloaks and white kid gloves, aye, better than a good many of the genteel people in the stalls and dress circle? They come in with orders; ye pay your sixpences like men—nay, like gods, as ye are. As regards theatricals in the kingdom of Coin, Sixpence is King.

I do look at the gallery, at the pit, at the boxes. A crowded house is at all times an exhilarating spectacle, even when you are not interested in the sixpences. It is well known that actors are depressed by a poor attendance. They say they act better when the house is full. We, spectators, can readily understand this; for is not our enjoyment of a play enhanced when we are among many? On the other hand, we all know how poor and cold the performance seems when the audience is thin. I believe in animal magnetism and electro-biology so far; there is a vivifying power in a multitude of eyes and animated faces. The sight acts as a stimulant. Try it, one of these pantomime nights, from the boxes of Drury Lane or Covent Garden. They cannot present you with anything half as wonderful on the stage side of the house.

My young friend, philosopher, guide, and manager has yet another theatre, which also owns him lord, to show me. We don't want a cab; all the three theatres are within a stone's throw of each other. A light-comedy skip or two across the flags, and we enter a covered carriage-way, leading to the principal entrances. No one shall ever get wet here waiting for a cab or carriage. Through the entrance-hall, up a flight of stone stairs, and I found myself in a noble saloon—not a place made flashy by mirrors and gilding, but a handsome apartment, designed, decorated, and furnished in the best taste. The doors and panels are chastely inlaid; the huge marble fireplace is a work of art, not of mere masonry; the carpet and hangings are of the richest materials. I want to linger here to wonder and admire; but I am dragged on to view the house.

Another bunch of keys. The third! Mercy on us! How is it that my young friend is still here on earth? How is it that he has not gone up, balloon-like, and settled in the seventh heaven, a constellation for all men to admire at

the respectful distance of several millions of miles? Once more I am taken into the manager's box. The third manager's box, but the same manager. Once more—the third time of asking—he bids me look at the house, look at the gallery, look at the boxes, look at the stalls. He does not bid me look at the pit; for it is a peculiarity of this new theatre that it has no pit. The whole of the ground-floor is occupied by stalls, and those who usually occupy the pit are put into a large amphitheatre immediately above the dress circle, and immediately under the gallery. Before I make any remark upon this arrangement, I must give vent to the feeling of delight and surprise with which a look at the new house immediately inspired me. I thought it was the most comfortable, the most elegant, the most luxuriously appointed theatre I had ever seen. Everything had been done with the most lavish hand to secure two things—comfort and elegance in the front of the house. It has often struck me as being very odd that managers of theatres should expect their fashionable and aristocratic visitors in stalls and private boxes to be content with sitting accommodation considerably inferior to that which is to be found in a penny ice-shop—muslin curtains of the very commonest quality, scraps of imitation tapestry carpet of the thinnest and cheapest description, narrow uncomfortable chairs, covered with American leather cloth, and triumphantly decorated with vulgar broad-headed brass nails. Society never comes in contact with such mean things anywhere else. It never touches, it never sees, such a cold, shabby, miserable thing as painted cotton—mockingly called leather—except in the theatre. This new theatre, at Liverpool, has evidently been designed and furnished to afford to its visitors in the best places all the comfort, elegance, and refinement which they are accustomed to in their own drawing-rooms. At the back of the dress circle there is a wide open promenade (in sight of the stage) softly carpeted, and in the centre of this promenade there is a large fireplace, enclosed in a magnificent frame of pure white marble. The stalls are furnished in the same manner. The carpet and the chairs are worthy of a palace. The private boxes are dainty little boudoirs, so dainty that you might imagine they were designed for ladies only. The refreshment and retiring rooms are commodious and elegant, and all the passages leading to them are richly carpeted.

This elegant and comfortable theatre is the outcome of a great theatrical revival in Liverpool. The revival began about five years ago. Previous to that time there were only two recognised theatres in the town. There was a notion that Liverpool could scarcely support two theatres. The drama was in this dull and stagnant state, having greatly fallen away from the activity of former years, when a gentleman arrived from Australia with new ideas and new experience of theatrical affairs. This gentleman, casting eyes upon a desolate lecture-hall, resolved, madly as everybody believed, to turn it

into a theatre for the performance of vaudevilles, burlesques, and farces. With astonishing energy, and in an astonishingly short space of time, he accomplished the task which he had set himself; and the public, on the night of opening, going in sparsely and doubtfully, found, to their delight and surprise, in the place of the dingy desolate hall, a smart, bright, cheerful little theatre. The enterprise of the manager developed as time went on. He attracted to his little theatre all the travelling stars in succession. He gave his patrons comedy and drama, as well as burlesques; he even had the courage to produce new pieces by London authors. He set the example of doing things well; and those who imitated his policy in other provincial towns speedily found their reward.

The elegance and comfort of the new theatre, while fulfilling the prime object which its builders had in view, are, oddly enough, in certain quarters a subject of complaint. Stars complain that room is wasted, and that the theatre might be made to hold a great many more persons—that is to say, pounds sterling. Actors generally hold that audiences enjoy a play more when they are crowded and uncomfortable than when they have plenty of space. When they have ample elbow-room, and can lie back and stretch out their legs, they give themselves up to lazy ease, and don't trouble themselves to applaud. Another special cause of complaint is the arrangement which devotes the whole of the ground area to the cold genteel stall people, and relegates the warm impulsive pitites to a distant region above-stairs. Both parties are dissatisfied. The actors long to be near the pit, and the pit longs to be near the actors. They know how to appreciate each other; but, being so far separated, a coldness ensues which is particularly depressing to the occupants of the stage, the breath of whose nostrils is applause.

When, at half-past ten o'clock, I parted from my enterprising young friend, he heaved a deep sigh. I understood what it meant. He sighed because he had no more theatres to show me.

### CHILDREN'S PARTIES.

THE influence of blood in animals is not to be denied. You cannot make a racer out of the colt of a cart-horse; but I question sometimes if this applies to the superior animal, man. Here are two babies, swaddled in dainty clothes, as it befits all babies to be. The one is the child of a princess, the other is the child of a washerwoman. Come, tell me which is which? Look into the eyes of both children. They are equally bright, equally blue, or black, or grey, as the case may be—little clear windows both, of pure little souls within, looking out wonderingly upon a world of sin and sorrow as yet unknown. Would you not think they had been cast in the same delicate mould? In this world of toil you know what the hard-working hand becomes—broad, rough, rugged, an ugly mass of strength, with not a line of beauty left. But look at the hand of this common child, whose

destiny it may be to wield the hammer or the spade. Could anything be more delicate, more beautiful? Which is the royal hand, which the plebeian? You cannot tell. Both have the same pretty little nails, both the same dimples at the finger-joints. How beautiful are the feet of a child! Mothers show them with pride, and smother them with kisses. When feet grow old, and have trodden the weary earth, they are shown no more. It is only when they are young that they are beautiful. Pity that it is not the fashion to hide faces when they grow old. I do not mean with years, but in worldliness; when the sweet mouth begins to express bitterness, and the tender eye to gleam with the fire of evil passions.

It is not until they grow up that the difference between the princess's baby and the washerwoman's baby becomes apparent. The former grows to be a fine gentleman or an elegant lady, distinguished by a delicate skin, by white well-formed hands, by an easy or graceful carriage; the latter develops into a slouching, horny-handed, brown-skinned navvy, or an ungraceful, ungainly wench. I cannot believe that even one-half of this difference is owing to blood. It is culture in the one case, and the want of culture in the other.

This dissertation brings me to the subject which gives its title to the present article. I have had the privilege to be present this season at three juvenile parties, representing three different grades in society; and I have found a perfect equality of attraction at all. One was given by a very grand lady, in a very grand mansion at the west-end; the second came off in the comfortable but unfashionable region of Camden-town; and the third took place in a paved court near Holborn. No less than two hundred juveniles were present at the first-named entertainment. It was a wet night, and when I arrived I found two stalwart policemen engaged in carrying fairy-like little girls up the wet steps of the grand portico. It was a strange sight. I had often seen policemen dragging away dirty ragged children to the workhouse or the station; but here they were, those rough men, in their rough blue suits, carrying in their arms the curled little darlings of the aristocracy, assisting them up-stairs, that they might not soil their dainty shoes. It was such a grotesque idea as might have entered the mind of a pantomime writer—a scene where the evil genii (though they were good genii, these men in blue) came in the shape of policemen and carried away the good fairies.

Ah, what a sight was presented in that grand saloon when all the two hundred children were on the floor together, dancing a quadrille! There were a great many little girls with flaxen hair, combed out into a feathery fleece of gold. Dressed in white, with pink and blue sashes, they looked like animated chimney-ornaments. It was a hard matter to refrain from taking them up in one's arms and kissing them, they were so sweetly and innocently pretty. The innocence of one young lady of seven years will scarcely be credited by those

worldlings who affect to see corruption in the very cradle. Her papa, pointing to a boy in a knickerbocker suit of black velvet, said, "That young gentleman is a marquis, my dear." The little innocent looked up wonderingly in his face and said, "What is a marquis, papa?" And when her papa explained that a marquis was a lord, the son of a duke, and asked her if she would like to dance with the young marquis, she said, "No, she was engaged for the next three dances to her cousin Tommy." Now Tommy's father was a plain Mister, with no handle to his name but Q.C. That young lady will know what a marquis is by-and-by, I suppose, and will like to dance with him—if she ever have the chance again—better than with the son of a Q.C. But she is in the full sweetness of her beauty now, when she does not know what a marquis is.

I noticed many little couples making love; and the younger they were, the more they seemed to be absorbed by the tender feeling. The big boys were slightly supercilious to the little girls. In the ball-room, I saw them lifting their eyes to the young women; in the refreshment-room, they turned with contempt from the weak negus and cakes, and I heard one of them ask a footman for a glass of sherry. I dare say that youth had begun to smoke, and to despise the companionship of his mother and sisters. He will come back to their loving bosoms again, when he has realised his dream of manhood and found it a vain thing.

My second juvenile party, in Camden-town, took place at the house of a lady, where I am in the habit of dropping in, in a friendly way, at any time. I was privileged to see the preparations. When I called two days before the event, Cicely came running to meet me at the gate, dancing and clapping her hands and crying out: "Oh, Mitter Timpson, mamma's going to have a juvenile party, and she's making such lots of pies and puddings and custards." And Cicely had been assisting, I could see; for her little nose was delicately tipped with custard. I found Lily, and Herbert, and Harry, and Franky all in the wildest state of excitement about the "juvenile party." There was no keeping them in the nursery; at every opportunity they made their escape and rushed tumultuously into the kitchen, where their mamma—a sensible lady who distrusts pastrycooks and likes to give her guests wholesome food—was preparing the good things with her own fair hands. The nurse said that not one of them had slept a wink for three nights, nor had she herself been able to sleep for their chatter, which was all about their dresses, the partners they should choose, the comparative merits of ginger and black-currant wine, and the cruelty of being sent to bed without being allowed to share in the supper provided for the grown-up folks.

For days beforehand a similar state of excitement and expectation prevailed in the nurseries of several houses in the neighbourhood, where Cicely's guests were counting the hours until the party-night. Two score of hearts beat happily

at the prospect of a dance and a feast of cake and British wine. All went merry as a marriage bell at Cicy's party, until the knocker proclaimed that the frys had come to take the young people home. Then I saw that certain young ladies and gentlemen were loth to part. Poor Cicy's pleasure had been greater in the anticipation than in the realisation. Her sweet-heart, Willy, had behaved disdainfully to her. Willy is an only son, who is much petted by his parents, and, since Cicy had last seen him, he had attained to the dignity of a jacket. He had also got a ring, a watch and chain, and a eard-case containing little cards engraved with his little name prefixed by "Mr." Cicy had looked at him with longing eyes all the evening, and by many innocent wiles tried to coax him to dance with her. But "Mr. William" looked down upon Cicy, and over her little golden head, and away from her; and at last I saw Cicy sitting in a corner, with her eyes wide open and full of tears, which, I saw, were welling up from the very depths of her innocent heart. "Mr. William," I am happy to say, was punished. His parents are fond of showing him off, and they have taught young hopeful to give a recitation, which is generally received with much applause. But on this occasion no one asked "Mr. William" to give his recitation, and, though he was dying to perform, he could not find an opportunity of doing so. It was wonderful to meet our old friend Retribution, in this way, at a child's party, and to find him still nimble enough to overtake a boy!

The third juvenile festival I have referred to may be described as a court ball; for it was entirely a dancing-party, and was given, as I have said, in a paved court near Holborn. I was not invited: I invited myself. I had been in the habit of taking a short cut to some chambers in Lincoln's-inn, and had frequently noticed little girls dancing in a side court to the music of a barrel organ. The promoter of these dancing-parties, I found, was one *Jemima Iggins*, a tidy sprightly girl of about ten years old. I think she was entitled to an H in her patronymic; but she was called *Iggins*, and as she did not dispute the name in that form, it is not for me to do so. *Jemima Iggins* was, so to speak, Queen of this Court, and her Lord Chamberlain was a ragged boy, named *Johnny Smith*. *Jemima's* courtiers were chiefly young ladies, for the most part dressed in print frocks, somewhat ragged, and not over clean, and stout lace-up nailed boots. *Jemima's* balls took place, I was informed, almost every evening in the summer, when the weather was fine. The full band was concentrated in the person of an Italian organ-grinder, and his honorarium was one penny—generally paid in farthings, as taxes, by Queen *Jemima's* subjects.

The ball entirely depended upon the state of the court treasury. The organ-grinder was in the habit of looking in every evening, and making inquiring grins of any of the young ladies who happened to be in attendance. The treasury was immediately inspected, and if a levy of two halfpence, or four farthings, could

be made, the Italian was invited to enter, when he at once unshouldered his organ and began to play. I seldom saw any boys joining in these dances. The girls danced among themselves—not quadrilles, but a kind of reel, in which they all did the same jiggling step, varied occasionally by a waltz or a polka. The boys were not at all in request. When they attempted to dance, they failed signally, and the girls were glad to get rid of them. Flirtation was not the object here; it was dancing; and I never saw dancing entered into with so much earnestness, or so thoroughly enjoyed. It was not boisterous dancing, by any means. My young friends in Curzon-street, or even those in Camden-town, might not call it genteel; but it was meant to be. It was evident that those poor girls, while dancing for their own enjoyment, were also dancing to attract the admiration of the spectators. They were doing their best, in their own fashion, to give a reading, so to speak, of the poetry of motion. It was, indeed, a very humble proceeding, dancing in a dirty court, under the open smoky sky of a great city, to the music of a barrel organ, ground by an Italian ragamuffin from Saffron-hill; but to me it was a pleasing, cheerful scene. The girls had made themselves as clean and tidy as possible for the occasion. No attentive observer could fail to perceive that, while dancing, they all made a point of standing very stiffly upon the proprieties. I could not help mentally exclaiming, "How slight is the difference between you and those who are called young ladies!" It is a mere matter of frock and manner. I believe you can make a lady out of any healthy, well-formed, well-disposed girl, if you only catch her young enough; and I shall live and die in the conviction that *Jemima* is a born lady.

## THE DEAR GIRL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "BELLA DONNA," "NEVER FORGOTTEN," &c.

### CHAPTER XXXVI. UNINVITED GUESTS.

MR. DACRES enjoyed himself vastly, fanning his face with his handkerchief, and performing quadrilles with all the agility of a "four-year old." He was going to dance with some "Miss Mary," when he felt a hand on his arm, and a gentleman standing before him said, with cheerful recognition:

"Mr. Dacres?"

"My dear sir, how do you do?"

"You remember me, don't you?"

"Well, now that you ask me, I can't say exactly—What? Not Sir John Trotter?" said Dacres, becoming haughty, suddenly recollecting that he had been "injured in a nice point" by that gentleman.

"I've been wanting you at Trotterstown, and have been intending to write to you every day."

"Oh! indeed, Sir John," said Dacres, soften-



ing. "Here, Lulu, pet, come over, dear. Here's Sir John Trotter, of whom you've heard me speak many and many a time."

This he added with a sort of pathos; and Lucy said, smiling: "Oh, yes!"

"My son is getting quite well again," said Sir John, "thanks be to the Lord! So now I have time to look about me. I am on my way to see him at Paris. I got all your messages by your kind friend, Mr. West."

"By my friend, West?" repeated Mr. Dacres, wonderingly.

"Yes!—when he visited me about you."

"Oh! true, true," said Mr. Dacres, with a readiness he had picked up in court; "to be sure. That time he went to you. And I am glad you found him satisfactory."

"You couldn't have chosen a warmer ambassador. He said everything he could, for he saw I was a little put out, you know. He said you would write, and I was surprised at not hearing from you."

Lucy was listening, wondering, and with something like a pang at her heart. Poor West! This was generous and noble, indeed!

The mayor and the distinguished guests, all round the amiable host, were complimenting, smiling, bowing. It was near midnight, when one of the servants, coming up to Beaufort, put a note into his hand.

"Not too late to ask for an invitation, I see," said the mayor, smiling, to Mr. Guernsey Beaufort, whose anxious, worn face was turned to the note. He saw a look of trouble in his face, and, in a moment, up came Mr. Blacker, express, pushing his way through.

"See here, Mr. Beaufort, could you spare us a few minutes?—a most important matter;" and he took him by the arm, and whispered in his important way.

Captain Filby was close by, and felt that an enormous screw was loose. He followed them cautiously. Presently he reported thus: "I kept my eye on 'em, and, just at the door, saw that new man, Morton, and his friend the judge's son, come up, and our respected clergyman, and the consul, sir, was with them." The gentlemen newly arrived were in their travelling dresses, with the wondering consul and clergyman invited by them to be present; and one of the travellers, stepping forward, said calmly, "I have asked you to come in here to put a simple question."

"I don't understand this proceeding at all," said Mr. Guernsey Beaufort, a little wildly.

"It is for your own advantage," said the other, "and, if you prefer it, we will go back and put it before all the room. No; you would not like that."

"I don't understand this business, either," said the consul. "Mr. Guernsey Beaufort is our host, and as enterprising and as liberal——"

"Ah!" said the other, looking the host hard in the face; "that brings me to the question I would ask. Do you still maintain you are Mr. Guernsey Beaufort, of Beaufort Manor?"

"I never said that. We are of the same family—the same Beauforts——"

"Good gracious!" said Mr. Blacker. "Why, you distinctly told me you were, and invited me to Beaufort Manor."

"I have been there often," said Mr. Beaufort, hurriedly; "and I know the place well, for my wife was a Beaufort. Yes; and we are of the same family."

"You are not," said Mr. Morton, promptly. "I may tell these gentlemen I am Mr. Guernsey Beaufort, of Beaufort Manor, who have travelled over to expose this person."

"It is false!" gasped the detected host.

"I have proof, too, that this man carried on this same imposture at Ostend: giving himself out under the same name, and swindling some of the tradespeople there. If he denies it——"

"I admit it—I own it all," said the unhappy host, turning from one to the other. "But, for pity's sake, spare us *for to-night*. My poor wife is innocent. She is indeed a Beaufort."

The clergyman said, gravely:

"You can wait till the morning. She is what he says, a kind, charitable, innocent lady; and, for *her* sake, I think Mr. Guernsey Beaufort—I mean *you*, sir—can wait."

"There can be no harm in that," said the genuine Mr. Beaufort. "You can go back to the company."

The pale and anxious face of Mrs. Guernsey Beaufort—we may so call her, because she *was* a Beaufort of some description—eagerly watched her husband's return. He came up to madame the mayoress, and, with a smile that Lucy long remembered, said:

"It is unpardonable of Le Bœuf. I assure you it was ordered for twelve punctually. I must go and see after him myself. Pay what you will, and whom you will, you see, madame, the master must do a great deal himself!"—a speech afterwards repeated often in Dieppe circles, when the curious story of the Beaufort ball was told, as a triumph of assurance and self-possession.

Mr. Beaufort was seen to go out of a side door which led to the restaurant of the place, and was shortly followed by his brother Ernest. The two gentlemen were never seen again by that company.

By half-past twelve Captain Filby was positively outrageous in his language.

"Asking people to famish them in this way! I believe there will be nothing to eat or drink at all, and that the whole is a plant."

But now Le Bœuf himself had come with the news. Where was M. Beaufort?

"Oh, he's all right, never fear; he's gone on. Open the doors, and we'll follow quick enough."

But Le Bœuf would not entertain that view of the matter.

Where was M. le Beaufort?

Where indeed! Who so fitting to ask, after a quarter of an hour's wait, as pale Madame le Beaufort? With a trembling voice, she—she does not know; then, very faintly, "Perhaps he has gone home unwell."

The truth flashes on Le Bœuf—a man of quick wit, and accustomed to all sorts of men in customer-shape.

"Heaven!" he cries, slapping his forehead, "I am assassinated! He has done me! He has escaped! The tide served at midnight!"

#### CHAPTER XXXVII. THE SCOURGE.

GILBERT, ill, feverish, hopeless, only waited restlessly for news from the ball. He had sent Margaret, who had promised him that a grand coup would be struck, and that the punishment she had so long promised would on this night overtake the cruel and selfish. "Not that I wish them punished. But how can I endure to see them happy and prosperous? Yet I *do* pray that it may be all ended for ever, this night, between them."

"But how would that help you, dear Gilbert?" said Constance. "Better cease to think of them altogether."

"So you think, Constance, and so do I, if I could. Is that Margaret? There she is! Come, the news—quick! Is all at an end?—is all over?—is he unmasked?"

Margaret was gloomy and excited. "I have failed. They have been too crafty for me. My long journey—all has failed."

"Failed!" he cried, starting up; "and they are to be happy, while I am to live on in this state of purgatory! Is there justice, or Providence? I have tried to fight with this; but I am helpless. Tell me," he went on, in this excited way, raising himself up—"tell me everything. What did they say?—how did she look? Ah, you won't tell me!"

It was not, indeed, Gilbert West who was uttering these incoherencies; it was a fevered and disordered brain. Then he sank back exhausted, and they saw his wild eyes fixed hopelessly on the ceiling. The two women looked at each other, Constance despairingly, Margaret desperately; and Margaret said, between her teeth: "This is *her* doing!"

"Ah!" said Constance, impatiently, "*that* is what has driven him to this. Working on his sense of injury, inflaming him. It is sinful and cruel!"

Margaret started, and surveyed her with infuriated astonishment. She had never more than tolerated this girl, and that simply because Gilbert liked her. But now this tone confounded her.

"Do you dare to interfere with *me*—to find fault? I would give my heart's blood for him!"

"That is nothing," said Constance, vehemently, "if you take *his*. This weary struggle will kill him, and—and—I cannot stand by and see it!"

She trembled at her own audacity. For Constance hitherto had been a sort of little slave, never objecting, always gently obsequious even.

"It is sinful and cruel," she went on, trembling; "and false, too. For I do not believe, as you would have him believe, that this girl is so full of hatred and wickedness. She is gentle and amiable, and there has been some mistake, I know. And I warn you now to stop this cruel inflaming of his mind with suspicions. I will not see it done any longer!"

Margaret, dumb with wonder, could not reply for a moment. She answered differently from what might have been expected.

"I see through all this," she said. "You are a mere fool; and, I warn you, don't think of interfering with me. Keep out of my path, I warn you. I know what will soothe him and ease him; and I tell you that wicked girls, women, or men shall find punishment!"

As she swept away, she seemed to have awestricken Constance like one of the avenging furies.

But Margaret scarcely thought of her. She was indeed filled with that one idea—that absorbing thought. She went to her room, hastily and eagerly.

"They shall not have their triumph, and he this degradation and suffering—their calm happiness and sweet engagement, letter-writing, constancy, and, at last, the happy return and long wished-for marriage. Never! I shall do it at all risks. This will spoil their jubilee."

And Margaret, going to her desk, took out what she had carefully put by—one of the sheets of note-paper with the picture of the Paris sanitary establishment at the top. At that late hour, and as she heard the hoarse chiming of the church-clock by, she was busy over her task. Then some one who was flitting about, keeping watch uneasily, heard her go down-stairs; and then, looking out of the window, the same watcher saw her go up the street, deeply veiled and wrapped in a shawl.

The doctor, who wrote on "Idiocy," was right. For some time back, through the length and breadth of France, dull, heavy rumours had been drifting that a dreadful enemy, who came, like a comet, at long intervals, approached slowly, and ravaged the country, might soon be looked for. An epidemic, that seemed more terrible than it is now; for it was unfamiliar, and medical men knew not how to deal with it. It was known to have reached France. It seemed to come with the solemn steady strides of a fell giant. People fled before the monster in a frightened herd—that is, the people of condition and substance. A great deal of his ravages were owing to the wretched drainage, the open sewer which every French street then was, and the rank odours which filled the air. There had been some talk about this plague before the ball.

Our colony had a good deal of what Captain Filby called "true British pluck," or what it fancied was pluck—indifference. The epidemic would not have the impudence to touch them; they could face it without that unworthy crying, or flying, or herding, or, as Captain Filby profanely said, "jabbering of prayers." Perhaps at the bottom of this indifference was the feeling that they could not fly, that they were driven to the edge of the sea, with their back to a wall, and must face it. How easy to cross over into dear happy old England! But, alas!—Still, it was not so likely to come *there*—to the charming Dieppe, always so

bright and gay and holiday-like, so fashionable, too, and rising every year into greater request.

Yet coming the grim enemy was, steadily and surely. Now at Paris, now nearer; now at Rouen, raging there among the old houses and streets; now at Havre, and *then* we begin to turn pale, in spite of the ball.

In half an hour it was known all over the town; up narrow streets—down to the port. Lights began to twinkle in the windows, for people were roused from their beds to hear the dreadful news. Down on the pier, the fishing-boats were going out, but did not put to sea, the fishermen standing in a crowd, talking it over in whispers again. It was a far more awful thing in its proportions *then*, than it has since been. The fishermen were considered happy that they could go on board, and sail away, with the sea between; *there* was impunity; many wished they were fishermen. Before two hours the chief of the police—surely a sacred person—was the next seized; before morning there were half a dozen. There *could* be no mistake, as some had fondly hoped. Every hour it seemed to multiply. Some, looking down into the street, saw people rushing by to fetch the doctor.

It was in this dreadful trial that Doctor Macan was proved in the fire—weighed in the balance, and not found wanting. That upper crust of carelessness, talk, punch, private censures, grumbling, all fell off, as it were, and there he was revealed, a true and clever, zealous man, posting from house to house, and bedside to bedside; not vanquishing—for no one could hope to do that—but alleviating. Had he been cut off during that crisis in his duty, they would have set up a statue to him, as they did at Marseilles to the bishop, who was zealous in the same good cause.

Harco was in a mortal fright, and grew quite low-spirited. "I know it'll catch me," he said, despondingly. "I am as courageous as any man living. Put me in front of a cannon, and see how I'll behave. But of this sort of thing I'd always a morbid terror, from that high. Just one touch here, light as a feather," added Harco, laying his finger on what Doctor Macan would have called Th' Appygasthrum, "and I'm gone, Lulu, pet, never to stand up and address a jury again. No, no, I go back in the very next boat, the same day and hour, or no one goes."

The difficulty of all the colony was his difficulty also. It was easy to get on board the English boat; but the claims of the trusting, easy, suffering class, who were ungratefully called the "Dieppe cormorants," were in the way. Some of the sober, sensible French looked grave. Mr. Penny, the clergyman, used the coming scourge freely as a text for sermons, and warned his congregation that "they should set their house in order."

Meanwhile Mr. Dacres had returned from the Ball, his Lulu on his arm. The dawn was breaking. The lamps, hanging from the cords

over their street, looked as pale and faded as many of the ladies did.

Lulu was sad; she was thinking of taking that favourable opportunity of breaking to him what she and Vivian had determined on. Perhaps he would have received the information calmly and hopefully, and said it might be for the best; where was the use of hurry? Now was her opportunity; for dear Harco, a little inspired, we must admit, broke into one of his high keys again.

"Such a night, my dear, and that gentlemanly Trotter! Nothing could be more handsome in a Scotchman. Stood a supper—no less—best wines that Chabot could give. That's what I like; and sang him my old song, dear. Never was in better voice. What in the name of — is that?"

Some one was at the door; some one was coming up-stairs hurriedly, three steps at a time; some one had bounded into the room. A bright and a happy face.

"My dearest girl, such a piece of news! You know the difficulties I was talking of. Well, while we were at the ball, a letter came to my house—oh, such a joyful letter! All has passed away, and we shall be married to-morrow—to-day, if we like."

"My own brave Vivian, I always said you were a true-hearted man—true and bright as steel." Mr. Dacres wrung him by the hand, firmly believing he had said so: the truth being, he had often expressed the most hearty doubts as to his fidelity. "And what is all this now?" he said, insinuatingly.

"A secret—the old secret," said Vivian, smiling, "and which I must keep to myself a little longer, unless Lucy insists."

The delighted Lucy shook her head. "No, no. It shall be yours."

"We'll fix to-morrow—eh?" said Dacres. "I'll see Penny at once, and have a little snug breakfast from Chabot's—eh, witch? But it's time now we were all in our beds. My legs are calling out, 'Bed, bed!' Good night."

Vivian smiled, and Lucy laughed. Before they parted, she found time to tell what they had heard about West.

"That is the only thing that disturbs me. I fear I have been very cruel and unkind. Perhaps we have mistaken him altogether."

"By-and-by," said he, "we will find all this out. Those bright eyes want their rest."

Then Vivian went away happy, and walked across in the pale daybreak. By its light almost he could read the letter that had brought such a deliverance. It was very short. It ran:

"Sir. I am directed by Dr. Favre to inform you that Madame Marie Vivian expired this morning, at nine o'clock. Awaiting your further instructions,

"I am, Sir, with the highest consideration,  
"JULES FAVRE."

"P.S.—I send this by special messenger."

"I should be grieved," he said, half to him-

self—"in all common decency. But it was no marriage. I have never spoken, and have hardly seen her since. God forgive her and them. It was a righteous judgment on them all."

So this momentous night at last came to an end.

#### CHAPTER XXXVIII. A MISSION.

WE may conceive the flutter in which this event found our Lucy—dress, flowers, bridesmaids—what not. Now, indeed, all trials—and there were many—were over—happily over. She and her darling soldier were at last to be united, and have done with their troubles. Yet one thing disturbed her—the state of West, and the curious discovery made the night before. Her father was actually then closeted with Sir John, and had quite captivated that eccentric gentleman. Mr. Dacres, indeed, owned that "West's behaviour was incomprehensible."

In the midst of The Dear Girl's preparations, West's image rose up before her: perhaps he had suffered more than they had known or suspected; perhaps there had been no spite or petty persecution; and now, who could tell what was his state? She had sent to make the conventional inquiries; but the messenger had seen Margaret, and come back scared by a cold and bitter reception. "He was as well as his enemies could wish him to be," was her answer.

While she was busy with some little preparation, her maid came to tell her that a lady wished to see her. For a moment she thought it was Margaret, and shrank in terror from such a meeting; but presently a figure glided into the room, which she knew to be Constance. She had often seen, but had never yet met her; for Constance, from some shyness or delicacy as to her position, always kept aloof.

Lucy ran to meet her with the cordiality of a friend. "I am so glad you *have* come here! Tell me about him quickly. I am so distressed. Oh! I heard something last night which I did not know before."

"This is true, then," said Constance, gently, sitting down as she was bid. "Your marriage is to take place to-morrow?"

Lucy looked down. "Yes. All obstacles are to be removed at last. But Mr. West—"

"Oh, he is ill, very ill," said Constance, sadly. "This morning he is up, and pacing about the room in great agitation. One idea has taken possession of him. If something only could be done—if you will see him, even."

"I would do anything in the world; especially as I begin to fear I was a little unjust in one thing."

"A little!" repeated the other, sadly. "Never was any one—forgive me saying so—so cruelly misjudged as he. I found it all out only within these few days. That is what has entered into his heart."

"How! what do you mean?" said Lucy, agitated. "I now know that, when he was

away, he generously travelled to Scotland on papa's business, and settled everything; but he acted as if he had done nothing."

"Because he was so proud and so hurt," said Constance, "that dreadful day, when he returned, and found that you had deserted him without a word—you, for whom he was living, for whom he had gone away."

"No!" said Lucy.

"You, who had led him on by false hopes. Why his whole life that time was planning and doing for you and yours. Where are your father's debts and persecutions now? Can you not guess the reason that all his harassing has ceased?"

"And was it Gilbert West? Oh," said Lucy, clasping her hands, "what does this mean?"

"It was for *you* he went back to his old place—though it was a trial he shrank from—had it repaired and fitted up. But you know all this, or must have guessed."

"Never, never!" said Lucy, getting up to walk about. "Oh, what is to be done?"

"Now, we may all ask that," said Constance. "He is the noblest and most generous of men. Did you not see with what calm dignity he bore all those cruel suspicions—which, let me say, should not have come from—"

"I know it, I know it, indeed," said Lucy, despairingly.

"About those wretched adventurers who fled last night, was he not right? You thought it was all spite, because they were friends of yours. Ah! it *was* because they were friends of yours he bore all that. And, oh, that cruel, cruel story sent round, that *he*, the man who had sacrificed so much for you, would have spied on you at that little fair, and circulated scandals. You should have known that was false, and not believed it a second. Not a word, not a whisper, passed his lips. When I tell you that Captain Filby was there—"

"Oh, what *have* I done?" said Lucy, infinitely shocked. "Why did I not know all this before? What can I do now?—tell me." She paused, then started. "Let us go to him at once. I long to see him, to beg his pardon."

The next number will contain the second Portion of

## HOLIDAY ROMANCE,

By CHARLES DICKENS;

Which will be continued in each Monthly Part until completed in Four monthly Portions.

In No. 460, for Saturday, the 15th instant, will appear the second Portion of

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